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AUG 28

EDITORIAL

SMOKED SALOMON

According to Wall Street wits, Salomon Brothers is being punished for lending too much money to the U.S. government. There are limits on the volume of bonds one can bid for at Washington's regular bond auctions, and Salomon violated them. C.E.O. John Gutfreund, one of the last unsmashed icons of the Roaring Eighties, has resigned, and some of the firm's clients are quite visibly becoming ex-clients.

Wall Street miscreants are never punished for their real crimes. Legally speaking, Drexel Burnham's victims were mainly its fellow Wall Street hellspawn—takeover artists and arbitrageurs. But the firm's real victims are pensioners who've seen their checks cut in half by junk-bond defaults, workers who lost their jobs in Drexel-financed "restructurings," and an entire economy poisoned by junk-bond debt. Our laws don't yet address such crimes.

There's half a point to the wits' take on this affair. Salomon's limit busting did sometimes artificially lower the government's interest rate. Of course, saving taxpayers money was the furthest thing from Salomon's mind; by hogging the bonds, the firm hoped that less piggy bidders would have to pay richly for a piece of Solly's hoard. And to keep the game going the firm relied on unpredictability, which at other times helped to keep the interest rate high, putting the squeeze on those same taxpayers. Salomon almost certainly wasn't the only limit buster, but it was the brashest; and only the squeals of shut-out bankers led to the government's investigation.

Salomon Brothers still owes the taxpayers a few billion. In *Liar's Poker*, his memoir of a brief career with the firm, Michael Lewis recounts how Solly robbed naïve S&Ls blind, contributing no small amount to the cost of the dozen-digit bailout. That, it seems, is a forgivable offense. Cheating fellow financiers isn't.

BLACKS AND JEWS
Jim Sleeper

PHILIPPINE STEAMROLLER
Susan Blaustein

ECONOMIC BLAHS
Doug Henwood

NORTH KOREA OVERTURES
Charles William Maynes

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Ted Solotaroff

GORBY'S REVOLUTION HOLDS

THREE DAYS THAT SHOOK THE KREMLIN

KATRINA VANDEN HEUVEL

The ignominious collapse of the eight-man junta that sought to overthrow Mikhail Gorbachev was an astonishing reversal of fortune and a stunning repudiation of the authoritarian past. But the crisis inside the Soviet Union is not over. The institutions that sent the tanks into the streets may be discredited but the problems that gave the reactionaries their pretext still exist. It appears that we have witnessed a victory in the battle for Soviet democracy—but not the end of the war itself.

It was never a mystery whom the coup leaders represented. All Soviet institutions are split between reformers and conservatives, but the people who orchestrated this counterreformation spoke for the reactionary wings of the military, the K.G.B., the Communist Party bureaucracy and the state industrial and agricultural ministries, which have branches in all of the fifteen republics. Centered in Moscow, with octopuslike tentacles extending to every town, these pillars of the old order have long been viewed by democratic forces as a kind of ominous "sixteenth republic."

Behind the scenes, the hard-liners had ferociously opposed Gorbachev's reforms since they were launched in 1985. But the last straw was the Nine-Plus-One accord, which Gorbachev signed with Russian President Boris Yeltsin and other republic leaders last April. It promised a new union treaty, a democratic constitution and multiparty national elections next year. The specter of even more, and institutionalized, democracy was too much. The sixteenth republic struck back.

The extraordinary images of

(*Continued on Page 253*)

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EXCHANGE.

'BULL'S-EYE'

Berkeley, Calif.

Katha Pollitt's bull's-eye article "Media Goes Wilding in Palm Beach" [June 24] was excellent. *Nation* readers might be interested in our phone information, consultation, research and document search and delivery services. We have, so far, more than 900 news articles, editorials, columns, cartoons, photographs and letters from newspapers and magazines on the Palm Beach case. We also have collections on battered women, child and adult sexual assault (including by doctors, police, clergy, baby sitters) and in particular on the campaigns to criminalize marital and date rape, and the court cases where those campaigns were victorious. We can tell you the states where marital and date rape are still legal.

Laura X
National Clearinghouse on Marital and Date Rape
(415) 524-1582

OFF THE MARK

Cambridge, Mass.

In an effort to bolster her argument in favor of media anonymity for women who accuse men of rape Katha Pollitt mischaracterizes my position. She claims that I have argued for the nonpublication of names of johns who have been arrested in prostitution sting operations: "Reporting" the names, she claims I said, would be wrong. I never made such an argument. As Pollitt well knows, I am against *arresting and prosecuting* the occasional consumer of illegal commodities, whether they be drugs, sex for hire or gambling. This was my argument: "It has long been recognized that there is a legitimate—indeed, a compelling—basis for distinguishing between the full-time professional purveyor of an illegal commodity and its occasional consumer." Thus, civil libertarians have long supported laws that decriminalize the purchase of small amounts of marijuana, even if the sale of large amounts is still punishable. The same is true of gambling, pornography and other consensual crimes. The fact that the operators of big-time gambling rings and pornography distribution networks are arrested isn't a very good argument for prosecuting every two-dollar bettor and every occasional consumer of a hard-core videocassette. Many civil libertarians would like to see all consensual crimes taken off the books. But they welcome laws, such as the one enacted in Ann Arbor, Michigan, under which users of small amounts of marijuana aren't criminally punished, while professional suppliers are still sent to jail.

Nor is Pollitt correct when she brushes over the real civil liberties issues that arise when a defendant is falsely accused of rape. Pollitt misinforms her readers by announcing that "studies have repeatedly shown that fabricated rape charges are extremely rare." In fact, false charges of rape are more frequent than false charges of any other serious crime. According to the most recent authoritative statistics, 8.4 percent of reported rapes turn out to be false. This translates to more than 8,000 cases each year. This percentage is more than twice as high as for any other serious crime. The tragic fact that rape is also the most underreported crime does not undercut the reality that some women do fabricate rape charges.

The civil liberties issues surrounding the horrible crime of rape—including whether the names of accusers should be kept secret—must continue to be debated, but they must be debated honestly without distorting the facts as Pollitt does. *Alan M. Dershowitz*

POLLITT REPLIES

New York City

Alan Dershowitz is right about my mischaracterizing his views. It was William Safire and the *New York Times* editorial board who opposed publishing the names of convicted johns back in 1979, and who now pillory the Palm Beach woman in print. The Dershowitzian idea I should have cited (it comes right after the not-so-relevant passage he quotes from his *Los Angeles Times* column) is his argument that johns should not be arrested even if prostitutes are, on the ground that a john is "an otherwise law-abiding citizen who occasionally seeks to taste the forbidden fruit of sex for hire," while the prostitute is a "professional," like a drug dealer. For her, "an occasional arrest is an expected occupational hazard"; for him, "it can ruin a marriage, destroy a reputation, scar his children, terminate a career." Dershowitz took a major bashing for his frank espousal of the sexual double standard, his ignorance of the desperate lives of prostitutes and his cynical views of marriage, so I won't belabor those points here (I can't resist noting the sheer illogic of his position, though: Don't arrest the people who might be deterred by the prospect, arrest the ones who don't care). What links his position on this issue with his stand in favor of publicizing the names (and everything else) of rape complainants is his hostile characterization of the woman in each scenario. The prostitute is a carefree criminal; the rape complainant may well be lying.

How likely is it that she is lying? Dershowitz, a lawyer, surely knows that "unfounded" does not mean fabricated. The 8.4 percent he cites comes from the F.B.I. Uniform Crime Reports—hardly an "authoritative" source but one regarded with caution by criminologists for, among other reasons, its uncritical reliance on raw police reports. Properly, police should classify a case as unfounded only when they determine that no offense occurred or was attempted. In practice, they label cases unfounded for a wide variety of reasons. For example, the complainant waited "too long" before coming forward (much has been made of the hours—first reported as nine or ten, later corrected to five—the Palm Beach woman waited before going to the cops); there isn't enough physical evidence (perhaps the complainant took a bath); the complainant refuses to cooperate with police (i.e., falls silent under a barrage of hostile questions); the complainant did not seem to the officer to be a sympathetic victim, or a jury-pleasing witness. Last year, the Oakland, California, police department admitted that it had labeled 24 percent of its rape cases unfounded solely because the complainant took drugs or was a prostitute. Who the complainant is matters a lot: Black women, poor women and adults are more likely to have their cases declared unfounded than are white women, middle-class women and girls under 12, for example. Who the officer is matters too: Male officers label cases unfounded much more often than do female officers.

Fabricated rape charges are thus a small fraction of unfounded cases, and *successfully* fabricated rape charges—the ones that lead to an arrest, which is what Dershowitz cares about—are even fewer. Susan Brownmiller, Gary D. LaFree and the team of McCahill, Meyer and Fischman—all experts on rape—separately analyzed three sets of data from the 1970s and came up with fabrication rates of around 2 percent, the same rate as for other violent crimes. But, as I said, this figure consists mostly of cases where no arrest was ever made. Furthermore, whether the determination of fabrication was correct is an open question, since police in the 1970s were even less inclined to believe rape complainants than they are now. In any case, Dershowitz's vision of 8,000 men arrested annually on false testimony is just not based on reality.

Is it fair to subject to media humiliation all women who report rape in order (theoretically) to deter or unmask the rare Potiphar's wife? It is interesting that Dershowitz doesn't repeat here his previously expressed view that publicity is good for rape victims (because it shows how many "good" women are raped and will thus eventually lessen the stigma). So I will take it that my instinct that that argument was a smokescreen is correct: The real appeal of publicity for rape victims is that it makes reporting a rape more onerous. Well, I care about innocent men too. The way to protect their reputations is for the media to report sex crimes more soberly, as I suggested in my article, and to publicize the innocence of men found to be falsely accused.

But why is the rare falsely accused man the star of the drama of rape? No rational person, looking at the treatment of rape in this country, could say that its most salient feature is an excess of trust in women, or zeal in pursuit of perpetrators. Quite the contrary. Its chief characteristic is that it puts genuine rape victims (98 percent of complainants) through such an ordeal, with so little hope of justice, that most (90 percent, according to *Time*) don't even report the crime. Dershowitz calls this "tragic," as if it were some sort of natural

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EDITORIALS.

Bitter History

Fear and anger, the enemies of democratic discourse, have almost totally obscured the circumstances and consequences of New York City College professor Leonard Jeffries's speech to a black arts festival audience this summer. His two-hour polemic was occasioned by the bitter controversy over "multiculturalism" in the curriculum of New York State schools, and it was aimed specifically at those who have criticized the tilt toward things black and African that the curriculum reformers have suggested. But when the *New York Post* picked out a few excerpts from the speech, which, among other infamies, attacked Jewish moguls in Hollywood (as well as Italians in the Mafia), Jeffries's speech became an event in the ongoing war between blacks and Jews.

Jeffries has been in similar trouble before. It is not only that he harps on the financing of the slave trade by certain Jews many centuries ago, as if that were really relevant to social relations in New York City today. But also, he really does make the Jewishness of his political opponents and intellectual critics the basis of their "devilish" positions. In his towering anger at the unremitting oppression and belittling of blacks in

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America, he has transmuted anti-Semitic stereotypes still at large in society into a conspiracy against his people.

At the same time, many Jews—and their allies on the barricades of Western Civ—respond with blind fear and complete lack of discernment to Jeffries's taunts. They inappropriately equate his remarks with state anti-Semitic policies, and they fail to see how the real racist nightmare in America is experienced by blacks, not Jews. And the Jewish chauvinism (and extreme neoconservatism) of the *Post*'s editorial page provides a daily affront to the city's racial minorities.

Much of what Jeffries said about the denigration of blacks and black culture was important and insightful, and should not be disqualified by the instances of twisted history and ad hominem slander (the whole speech was not published until a month had passed while the controversy boiled, and then only by *Newsday*, the smallest New York daily). Above all, his speech was not meant to expound a civil rights strategy to white (or Jewish) America but to sound a cry of pain and distress to African America [see Jim Sleeper, below]. His anger must be engaged, not feared and dismissed, if the real racial division it represents is to be healed. The eruption of black-Jewish violence in New York's Crown Heights section last month shows that the issues are more than academic.

Blacks and Jews

"I believe it is time to get beyond Dr. Leonard Jeffries or our reaction to him and to find out if his assertions are true or false," says New York State Assemblyman Albert Vann, chair of the Black and Puerto Rican Legislative Caucus, about the City College professor's charges at an arts festival in July that Jews have conspired against blacks in Hollywood, in setting educational policy and in promoting the slave trade.

It's unclear who called this court into session, and who is judging whom, and by what warrant. But whether this is a trial of the Jews precipitated by the ovations some blacks have given Jeffries, or whether it is a trial of Jeffries and his supporters prompted by Jews' outcries, it is a setback for the legitimate claims of multicultural education, which his celebrants, not the media, insist on linking to his fate. Worse, it is yet another wrong turn for a black protest politics that, since the Tawana Brawley case, has kept mistaking communal psychodramas that belong in cultural theaters for the interracial organizing desperately needed in public places.

The emergence of C. Vernon Mason, of Brawley hoax fame, as Jeffries's attorney is a tip-off as to how this will end. Just as Mason and some of the same activists needlessly alienated a thin but vital stratum of white ethnics who wanted justice done in Howard Beach; just as he and others embittered feminists in the Central Park jogger case; just as their tactics in the boycott of two Korean groceries in Brooklyn dislodged the Asian tile from Mayor David Dinkins's "gorgeous mosaic," so now they are burning blacks' last bridges to liberal Jewry.

The reason few black leaders warn of the danger can be found in the admonition of Michael Meyers, a black attorney who heads the New York Civil Rights Coalition: "Too many of us are intimidated by charges that we are controlled by the establishment, are tokens of the whites," he told *The New York Times*. So the air is thick with rationalizations: Jeffries is merely speaking the scholarly truth; Jeffries has been misrepresented—proof of yet another conspiracy.

The full text of Jeffries's conference remarks reveals a rambling polemicist, not a scholar. He said that Jews and the Mafia had engineered "a financial system of destruction of black people. . . . It was calculated." He said that resistance to multiculturalism is led by U.S. Education Department official Diane Ravitch, "a Texas Jew" and a "debonair racist." "Many people, such as the Ravitches, who happen to be Jewish, have blinded us on the attack coming from the Jewish community—systematic, unrelenting. . . . Not anti-Semitic to raise the issue—but if you do not deal with it, you're fooling yourself."

The question is not whether such charges are true, or taken out of context. The question has to be why, with a dozen black film directors moving mainstream audiences, Jeffries waves a list of dead Jewish movie moguls; why, when George Bush has given us education secretaries such as William Bennett, Jeffries singles out Ravitch; why, after the Korean boycott highlighted black economic desperation, he talks about Jews in the slave trade.

There are historical reasons, of course. Jeffries has made Jews surrogates for the white establishment and exaggerated their marginal role in slavery because Jews have been classic intermediaries between urban elites and the black poor. If you were a black New Yorker in the 1950s, Jews often decided whether you got an apartment, job, passing grade, welfare check or probation. "In most cases," notes Brooklyn newspaper publisher Andrew Cooper, "the encounters were not unfriendly. But there's bound to be a reaction when you feel people are manipulating your life and have power over what you can achieve."

Enter Jeffries, a bit late, ushering his listeners into a psychic landscape flickering with old, familiar demons. Yet that side of his black-Jewish story doesn't fully explain his allusions, for no other white group has given more, individually and collectively, in dollars, votes or moral witness, to black struggles for justice. In a curious way, this side of the story, too, helps explain his obsession.

Simply put, Jeffries understands that Jews are white folks whose skin you can get under. Baiting them gets a rise out of at least part of the white establishment, no small thing for aggrieved blacks to whom no one listens. Out of their peculiar mix of insecurity and idealism, Jews do listen. They are the first among whites to take alarm at black rage. Others show far less concern, and some of them don't care much for Jews, either. That takes a lot of the risk out of Jeffries's posture of defiance.

But because Jews listen, baiting them has long-run costs. For instance, Jews have always supported black candidates at rates double those of other white groups—even in David Dinkins's 1989 victories over Edward Koch and Rudolph Giuliani. Jeffries is investing needlessly in the demise of that support. That, combined with the consequences of the paroxysms that have alienated other groups, means that Dinkins is New

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York's last black Mayor for the foreseeable future.

Given Dinkins's fiscal-crisis politics, that's not the worst of the consequences. Once again, decent progressive blacks' hopes for social change are being derailed by charlatans; once again, thousands of innocent blacks are going to suffer yet more undeserved isolation and contempt. There has to be a better way forward, for blacks and for all of us.

JIM SLEEPER

Jim Sleeper, an editorial writer for New York Newsday, *is the author of* The Closest of Strangers: Liberalism and the Politics of Race in New York *(Norton).*

Three Days

(*Continued From Front Cover*)

popular resistance in Moscow's streets, led by Boris Yeltsin from the headquarters of the Russian Republic's popularly elected Parliament, should not lead us to believe that the law and order promised by the coup leaders lacked popular support. Soviet public opinion polls show that a sizable part of the population ranks the fostering of democratic values below increasing the food supply, solving consumer shortages and cutting street crime. This is not surprising in a country with centuries of unbroken authoritarian rule—czarist and Communist. Compared with that tradition, democratic experience, limited to the *perestroika* years, and democratic values are new. Authoritarianism and democracy have coexisted uneasily for nearly seven years and were in open conflict last week over a fissure running through the political soul of the nation.

For years Western commentators and ultraradical Soviet intellectuals have charged Gorbachev with implementing his reforms too slowly. Last week those critics saw the true nature of the forces that have blocked, menaced and threatened his *perestroika* program since 1985. After belittling what Gorbachev accomplished, they should now marvel at how much he has achieved.

Here in the United States, we must ask what the Bush Administration did and did not do—and what it should now do—to truly help Gorbachev's reform process. When he first came to power calling for "fundamental reforms" of the neo-Stalinist system, he was dismissed by the majority of American commentators as little more than a technocrat, "a Stalin in Gucci shoes." Many Western policy-makers characterized Gorbachev as an obstacle to rather than a force for democracy. And though the struggle was and remains essentially an internal Soviet matter, it is both untrue and irresponsible to deny that the United States could have played a more positive and supportive role in the struggle for democracy.

Despite Bush's noisy embrace of him (and Yeltsin) last week, Gorbachev was wagering his personal authority and, as it turned out, his own life, when he conducted a conciliatory policy toward Washington in hopes of enticing it to meet him halfway. By any measurement, the United States has not traversed a quarter of the way. All the concessions have been on the Soviet side, further undermining Gorbachev's position at home among the national security elite. Moreover, the 1989 invasion of Panama and the war in Iraq dealt a severe blow to Gorbachev's "new thinking," which ruled out force to settle international differences, and thus radically undermined his argument that it was necessary and safe to demilitarize the Soviet system. The gulf war also emboldened and strengthened the zealous guardians of the old national security order, already enraged by Gorbachev and former foreign minister Eduard Shevardnadze's policies. Forced to watch in dismay as Communist parties collapsed in Eastern Europe, they resented the betrayal of their prized ally in the Middle East.

As the friends and foes of tank politics confronted each other inside the Soviet Union last week, there could be no doubt about what Gorbachev had achieved and what was at stake. For the first time in Russian and Soviet history, after centuries of authoritarian rule, the country's leader had crossed the Rubicon to democracy. That historic step alone has earned Gorbachev a remarkable place in his country's, and the world's, history. For those who continue to insist that he did too little too late, let it be said that without Gorbachev's reforms, there would have been no citadel of democracy in Yeltsin's Russian Parliament, no nationalist movements in the republics, no press struggling to stay free and, in all likelihood, few if any demonstrators in the streets.

A reformation of such historic dimensions as *perestroika* could not be expected to unfold quickly, painlessly, smoothly or without tragedies. In the coup's collapse, the world has witnessed an extraordinary case of democratic ideas defeating naked force. But the battle for democracy is not over.

★

A Song For Senator Harkin

If Harkin (Tom) decides to run this fall
For President, the biggest cheese of all,
He'd surely be the Corn State's favorite son,
Which could give others one excuse to shun
The caucus circuit in that worthy state—
And all that meatloaf, which, in truth, they hate.

Chorus (sung by Clinton, Wilder, et al.):
So run, Tom, run.
It's really lots of fun.
You pop off to Des Moines.
We'll stay, and gird a loin.
(Oh, bliss: We needn't say with crystal clarity
Just what is meant these days by farm-price parity.)

Calvin Trillin

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BEAT THE DEVIL.

Unheroic Couplet

This was *Ivan the Terrible, Part 2½*; history as farce. The Gang of Eight should have read their Lenin, assuming copies of his works are still available in the Moscow public library. If you plan to seize power, then seize it. Don't sit around all day watching CNN and complaining that Boris Yeltsin is getting too much airtime.

The night before the Russian Revolution in 1917 many of the comrades began to shift around in their seats, saying maybe this wasn't the right time to seize power after all. Lenin walked halfway across the city in the middle of the night to stiffen the spine of the Bolshevik central committee. Maybe it would have been better if Lenin had stayed home in bed. That way we would have been spared the final, farcical outcome of so much tragedy and sacrifice: Western ambassadors supervising the restoration of constitutional order, while Boris Yeltsin thanks George Bush for his support in these difficult hours.

The Gang of Eight seem to have thought that it would all be an easy rerun of the way Khrushchev got dumped, back in the early sixties. There was K., boss of all the Russias, on a Black Sea vacation. Next thing he knew, Anastas Mikoyan was firmly taking the phone from his hand as he tried to talk to the cosmonauts, saying that it was time to be getting back to Moscow. Khrushchev was out forthwith while his colleagues figured out the pecking order for the next time they lined up on top of Lenin's mausoleum.

That was the way the Gang of Eight thought it was going to be: solemn talk about the Motherland, tanks rolling into Red Square, a new line up on the reviewing stand while Gorbachev embarked on lifetime convalescence in a well-guarded nursing home.

In fact much of what the Gang said in their initial proclamation was true. After six years of Gorbachev the Soviet Union is, in economic terms, falling apart. On I.M.F. estimates (which have a penchant for exaggeration where the Soviet Union is concerned), the rate of growth in Soviet G.N.P., which had been sluggish at about 1.7 percent in the three years up to 1988, turned negative in 1989, at -8.4 percent, crashing to -17.7 percent in 1990. So in two years, on this measure, the Soviet economy has shrunk by a quarter. It's hard to think of any government surviving calamity on this scale. (It has to be said that estimates of disaster by the O.E.C.D. and the Bank for International Settlements are much more restrained.)

As the Gang stated, "Torrents of words and piles of declarations and promises only underline the scanty and meager nature of their [i.e., the Gorbachev crowd's] practical deeds." True enough. "Whereas only yesterday," the Gang's proclamation went on, "a Soviet person finding himself abroad felt himself a worthy citizen of an influential and respected state, now he is often a second-rate foreigner, the attitude to whom is marked by either contempt or sympathy." True, too.

And besides, the Gang said, there was all this sex and violence, which the statement described as "the octopus of crime and glaring immorality." The Gang felt outrage at the pass to which things had come. Probably a lot of Soviet citizens feel the same way as they've watched their living standards fall and started worrying about being mugged on the way home from work. What the Gang didn't have was a plan. They haven't had one since the mid-eighties, in contrast to the liberal agenda of people like Gorbachev's old comrade-in-arms Aleksandr Yakovlev, who said, as he was being expelled from the Communist Party, "Our task is to enter the international division of labor so that foreign investors accept us as a normal country, so that Western capital sees us as a place with laws. Our psychology here is still different. All the normal layers of society here were exterminated: the aristocracy, the merchants, business people. Now everything has to be built up again." Come home, Prince Yusupov, all is forgiven. But this is at least a strategy. All the Gang could offer in response was nostalgia: Let's get back to the good old days when the Soviet Union counted for something in the world, and when centralized planning and the command economy more or less worked.

The trouble is that even before it was willfully disassembled by reformers naïvely hoping that "market forces" would come to the rescue, like hair restorer, the old command economy was hopelessly constipated. In Stalin's time the planners were supervising allocation of about 300 essential items. By the eighties this had risen to more than a million. Try to supervise the distribution of a million commodities of one sort or another and you've got bureaucrats shifting at least 10 million forms in triplicate from one desk to another. Their In and Out trays were the size of warehouses.

The Gang of Eight probably had the Tiananmen precedent in mind, but they didn't study the whole menu. When Deng Xiaoping and his colleagues decided to clamp down, they went all the way. They wouldn't have given a Chinese Boris Yeltsin the chance to harangue the crowd from a tank in front of the Gate of Heavenly Peace. But the Chinese leadership also had an economic strategy, embarked upon in the late seventies, which may or may not have much to do with socialism but which has now produced a growth rate of 10 percent, the highest in Asia.

The Gang of Eight had no strategy. They also had no sense of history. They didn't realize that whatever their economic travails, Soviet citizens cared passionately about the political reforms and had no yearning to turn the clock back. If they had been reading their Marx, the Gang would have known that, but then they were probably too busy watching CNN.

T-Bill Stakes

Each political system breeds the evils it deserves. A small group of ruthless men, brazenly disregarding their nation's laws . . . conspires to fix U.S. Treasury bill rates. Such is the capitalist way. As Adam Smith once wrote, whenever two or three businessmen are gathered together under one roof they conspire to fix prices and bilk the public.

It's too bad that the commotion in the Soviet Union has somewhat obscured the Salomon Brothers scandal, which dis-

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ALEXANDER COCKBURN

tills the Roaring Eighties into their purest essence. The Reagan and Bush Treasuries, striving to finance the enormous deficits run up by the Reagan and Bush administrations, make bond offerings for which a group of traders concocts a series of collusive bids. These bidding rings win the traders pots full of money and frequently raise the government's cost of borrowing, such costs being ultimately covered by the taxpayer. It was yet another way of redistributing wealth up the pyramid.

After a cursory attempt to maintain that these maneuvers were the work of a few rogue operatives on Salomon's trading floor it turned out that all was known and countenanced by Salomon's top brass and that price fixing has been the norm in the Treasury markets. Thus the Wall Street traders imposed an extra handling fee in return for the lucrative concession—marketing government securities—they already held. Treasury officials seem to have had a fairly clear idea of what was going on, but acted only when the fixing became too blatant and too extortionate for some of the traders themselves to swallow.

Such are the mechanics of a system toward which some Russians, including Boris Yeltsin, aspire.

Fidel North & South

Not so long before the Gang of Eight told Gorbachev he was sounding kind of chesty and counseled total rest and plenty of Friar's Balsam, the Soviet President had attended the G-7 meeting of the world's chief capitalist nations. Here the terms of the New World Order were drafted and Gorbachev attracted much favorable coverage in the press for his eloquent comportment as he rattled his begging bowl.

Reporting of these proceedings stood in marked contrast to the dispatches filed from Guadalajara, where, simultaneous to the G-7 colloquy in London, nineteen Latin heads of state and the leaders of Spain and Portugal contemplated the bleak progress of the Third World.

But the First World press likes its Third World stories to have a simple narrative curve, and so in Guadalajara the message was Castro, Man of the Past. The "Odd Man Out in Guadalajara" was what *Time*, in its July 29 Latin American edition, called the Cuban leader, "increasingly isolated," a "lonely figure." While the other leaders "predicted a bright future for Latin America," Castro insisted on talking about dismal topics such as "hunger and illiteracy and debt." Such depressing chatter, said *Time*, heightened the sense "that he [Castro] was in a world apart" (an observation more befitting those who see bright days ahead amid cholera, recession and growing poverty in much of the region). *Time*'s reporter, Andrea Dabrowski, or the rewrite man, Michael Serrill, even claimed that Fidel "is regarded by many of his peers as the main impediment" to Latin American integration.

Newsweek's Latin edition coverage that week—"Fidel's Fantasy World: Latin leaders try to convince Castro that the revolution is over"—was much the same. The article said Fidel "vexed" the others in attendance, citing one "angry South American foreign minister" as saying Fidel's conference comments were "impossible, inadmissible." Like the piece in *Time* it evinced little interest in the political positions taken at the Guadalajara meeting.

Views of Guadalajara from the South were somewhat different. *O Globo*, the most conservative of Brazil's major newspapers, reported that Castro would "return [to Havana] content. . . . The Cubans leave here feeling closer to the region." As the newspaper noted, Chile and Colombia took advantage of the conference to re-establish diplomatic ties with Cuba, leaving Uruguay as the only Latin country that has still failed to do so. It also cited U.N. Secretary General Javier Pérez de Cuéllar and O.A.S. Secretary General João Clemente Baena Soares, both on hand in Guadalajara, as saying it was time Cuba returned to the latter institution, from which it was expelled at the bidding of the U.S. in 1962.

Another *O Globo* story emphasized that Brazil favors direct elections in Cuba but is against external interference in any of the region's countries. Brazilian President Fernando Collor de Mello told the newspaper he had informed Fidel that his country would eagerly "respond to any call, for any request for collaboration that the government of Cuba wants from Brazil." The centrist Rio newspaper *Jornal do Brasil* headlined a major story on the conference, "Collor rejects pressure to force Fidel to change Cuba." The article said Brazil had "always rejected the American thesis of isolation [of Cuba]."

As to the meeting's political pronouncements, both papers emphasized the gathering's closing document, the content of which—including an endorsement of Cuba's proposal for the democratization of the U.N.—was ignored by *Time* and *Newsweek*. Latin leaders, *O Globo* reported, backed the idea because they felt the U.N. had traditionally been "an instrument of the industrialized countries." The statement also attended to another request of Castro's by not endorsing any specific form of government: "We recognize the right of every nation to construct in peace, with stability and justice, its political system and institutions." As *O Globo* noted, while Fidel had little direct input into the final document, it sounded remarkably similar to his own views on many issues.

In their obsession with Castro the U.S. reporters failed to pick up on many indications, visible at the conference, of Latin frustration with the First World. The final document called the region's $450 billion foreign debt "one of the principal obstacles to the growth and stability of the region." Collor, one of Latin America's current crop of neoliberals, assailed the industrialized countries while in Guadalajara, accusing them of blocking the region's growth. In an interview with the Mexican newspaper *Excelsior* he said, "The end of the world's ideological division has not signified an era of peace and prosperity but has led to the emergence of a great empire, the Empire of the North, absolutely rich, which controls the most advanced forces of knowledge." Neoliberal Third Worlders aren't meant to say that sort of thing and so, as far as the First World was concerned, Collor never said it. Heard melodies are sweet; those unheard are sweeter.

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MINORITY REPORT.

CHRISTOPHER HITCHENS

Beirut

I was standing and talking with Elham Cicippio, Lebanese wife of the American hostage Joseph Cicippio, at the exact moment when she received the news that her husband had been released. This meant that I was also standing and talking to her, having uttered the banal and inapposite word "Congratulations," when she was told no, sorry, there's been a crossed line. It's another American, Edward Austin Tracy, who's been set free on the road to Damascus. That morning's grubby communiqué, which had brought us to the rendezvous in a downtown hotel, had certainly borne a photographic image of Mr. Cicippio and had promised his manumission. I had been shy of approaching his wife at first, as she smoked and paced around, but she was welcoming and typically Beiruti in her stoicism. "I've waited five years, I can wait a few more hours. He'd just fixed the kitchen when he was *enlevé*, and now it needs doing up again." But when she heard the trick that had been played on her, she just went dead quiet and bolted, through the bellowing camera crews ("How does it feel?"), to her car.

There weren't many laughs to be had that morning, though the statement from Washington that the Administration has a "longstanding" policy of no deals with kidnappers lent an element of comic relief to a city sorely in need of it. Every child in Beirut knows that, by simultaneously swapping arms for hostages with the Iranians *and* underwriting the Israeli occupation of south Lebanon, the Reagan-Bush crew is heavily complicit on both sides of the current squalid horse trading. If you recall, Reagan himself was very annoyed when this degrading practice on his part was first exposed to view. As he told the lazy Washington press corps—truthfully for once—he might have got clean away with it if it were not for the awkward disclosures made by "that rag in Beirut."

I thought it might be instructive to hear what the rag thought of recent developments, so I took a bucketing taxi through the rather battered streets of the Mazraa district and presented myself at the offices of *As Shiraa*. I was most courteously received by Hassan Sabra, founder and editor of the magazine. He and his young daughter Nisreen are now fully recovered from the murder attempt made on Sabra on October 14, 1987, when, after a number of threats from Hizbollah forces in the city, he was ambushed in his car and shot through the face and neck, with Nisreen, then 9 years old, getting a bullet in the stomach for good measure.

Sabra has always had very good inside contacts with Teheran. He is himself from a Shiite Muslim background in the Hadatha area of south Lebanon, which is now partly under Israeli occupation. After completing his master's degree (on the history of Maronite Christianity) at the University of Cairo, he became a Nasserite and worked on the magazine of an Arab nationalist party in Beirut. Becoming interested in the Iranian revolution, he followed Khomeini's progress from Najaf, Iraq, to Paris. When Khomeini returned to Teheran, Sabra was on the plane with him and interviewed him on several subsequent occasions.

He views the original revolution positively, it having changed Iran from "a Persian country hostile to the Arab world" into a nation that could do business with that world. But in his magazine he has denounced Khomeini's policy in Lebanon: support for the militias, the taking of hostages and the stupid call for an Islamic republic. Partly as a result, perhaps, *As Shiraa* became the recipient of hard information from discontented sources within Iran. Those friends who came to his office in October 1986 and told him of the North-McFarlane backstairs dealing were bringing information direct from Said Mehdi Al-Hashemi, a former leader of the Revolutionary Guards who had been arrested for his opposition to the bargaining. (In a further example of the regime's impatience with leaking and muckraking, Hashemi was executed in October 1987, the same month as the attempt on Sabra's life, though of course one doesn't want to sound in the least conspiratorial.)

I asked Sabra if he could throw any light on the suggestions, now being investigated by Congress, that the Reagan Administration in 1986 was following a trail blazed by the Reagan campaign in 1980. He replied that according to his friends and contacts, there had never been any complete rupture in relations between Washington and Teheran, mutual propaganda barrages about Satanism and terrorism notwithstanding. U.S.-Iranian negotiations in 1980 "reflected internal struggles in both countries," he says. "The delay in the release of the American hostages indicated the ability of the Iranians to affect the outcome of an American election, and there were those who wanted to do this more than they cared about who won."

Had he heard specifically of any coordination on the American end? Sabra looked at me, I thought, rather narrowly. His Iranian contacts, he said, would no longer be safe in Lebanon. I wasn't certain how to interpret this except in the obvious way implied by the scars on either side of his head and neck, but decided to rephrase my question. Had the Iranian forces who wanted to intervene in the American election of 1980 concerted their actions with any American counterparts? His reply was that of a patient adult to an impatient child. I had to remember that in such a process there were sure to be losers. In Iran it was the secular and centrist forces of Abolhassan Bani-Sadr who were defeated by those who later surfaced as partners in Iran/*contra*. And why had Bani-Sadr been defeated? "Because he wanted to secure Iranian rights by negotiating with *existing* and legitimate United States authorities, while the others wanted to alter the result of the American election." To alter it, I was permitted to assume, was not the same as working for the re-election of Jimmy Carter.

When had he first heard this? "In 1980. And in Iran." He didn't seem to find the idea particularly astonishing or novel. A shrug, a grin. Anyway, *As Shiraa* had been dead right the last time. I thanked Sabra and told him that his many admirers looked forward to further scoops. Another shrug, another grin, as he touched his scars. "I'd better get over the last one first."

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WATCHING RIGHTS.

ARYEH NEIER

I went to El Salvador for the first time in 1981, when the carnage there was at its peak. According to the human rights office of the Catholic Archdiocese of San Salvador, some 13,000 civilians were killed in political violence that year in targeted executions by uniformed and nonuniformed death squads and in indiscriminate military massacres. During the next several years I returned often, and though the number of those murdered in a given period had usually declined since my previous visit, that hardly warranted the State Department's automatic certifications of "progress" or "improvement." By any measure other than a comparison with the mind-numbing statistics of 1981, the country remained a human rights disaster area, an abattoir. There was never a moment when people could dissent peaceably with reasonable assurance that they would not be killed, and it was impossible to foresee an end to the nightmare.

In August, after an absence of nearly four years, I visited El Salvador again. Although many violations of human rights persist, and a large part of the population suffers from such continuing abuses as forced displacement, I came away believing that the situation is changing dramatically.

The United Nations deserves much of the credit. Its mediators are negotiating a peace agreement between the government of President Alfredo Cristiani and the F.M.L.N. guerrillas that is virtually a charter of human rights. It includes restructuring the armed forces so as to subordinate them to civilian control; "purifying" them by the dismissal of officers known to be responsible for gross abuses; creating a civilian police force that is not linked to the military; overhauling the judiciary; and establishing a Truth Commission along the lines of the commissions in Chile and Argentina that investigated and acknowledged the human rights abuses that those countries suffered under military dictatorship. Much will depend on ratification and on details still to be worked out, but agreements in principle have been reached.

Among the U.N.'s most significant achievements is the establishment of ONUSAL, an agency that is already beginning work to monitor human rights practices of both sides in the war. When I visited, ONUSAL was in the process of opening offices in half a dozen Salvadoran cities to monitor human rights. The staff is being recruited from outside El Salvador and includes lawyers and others with extensive experience in documenting violations in other countries. Several are Chileans who previously served on the staff of the Vicaría de la Solidaridad of the Catholic Archdiocese of Santiago, an organization widely regarded as among the most effective human rights groups anywhere in the world. In the post-Pinochet era, their services are no longer urgently required at home, so they are responding to the challenge to apply their skills in El Salvador.

ONUSAL has a budget of $23 million, by far the largest sum ever expended per capita to monitor human rights anywhere in the world. (For purposes of comparison, this is roughly four times what Human Rights Watch spends to follow more than sixty countries worldwide.) The detailed investigations that will be possible and the fact that they will be conducted by a neutral agency whose role has been endorsed by both parties to the conflict virtually insure that future abuses of human rights will not engender disputes about the facts like those that have characterized the debate over El Salvador up to now. ONUSAL's findings will be authoritative; denials of abuses or attempts to exculpate those responsible should no longer be possible.

In El Salvador monitoring human rights in this manner is essential to stop the fighting. The F.M.L.N. has good grounds to fear that its members would suffer the same fate as the Colombian guerrillas who signed peace agreements in recent years: laying down their arms, forming legal political parties and then being gunned down by the hundreds. The risks that the F.M.L.N. will face in El Salvador will likely be diminished because ONUSAL is there to investigate every case and fix responsibility.

Monitoring is needed before a peace agreement is concluded and also because those on both sides with selfish reasons to perpetuate the war may do so by adding to El Salvador's long list of spectacular crimes. ONUSAL's presence reduces the likelihood that those contemplating such moves would, as almost always in the past, go scot-free. (Effective prosecutions in the forthcoming trial of nine military men charged with the November 1989 murder of six Jesuit priests, their housekeeper and her daughter would also serve that purpose, even though others responsible for those murders probably will escape trial.)

The U.N. mediator who has brought the negotiations to this point is a Peruvian diplomat, Alvaro de Soto. He has been ably abetted in efforts to promote human rights by Francesc Vendrell, a Spaniard who is an aide to Secretary General Javier Pérez de Cuéllar, and Pedro Nikken, a Venezuelan jurist. Their enterprise is without precedent, the U.N. having had little role in dealing with civil wars—despite the worldwide prevalence of such conflicts—and having never previously established a human rights monitoring agency within a country. Indeed, much of the U.N.'s human rights record is dismal, marked by deference to powerful nations and powerful blocs (as a consequence, a country such as China has never been censured by the United Nations for human rights abuses). In El Salvador, however, the United Nations is at last fulfilling the hopes of those who envisioned it as a vehicle for protecting human rights.

Among the other factors contributing to the prospects for peace and radical transformation in human rights is the apparent commitment to the process by President Cristiani, despite fierce opposition by some in his own right-wing party, ARENA. That opposition could be very destabilizing; several of those to whom I spoke in El Salvador predicted a drastic deterioration in the human rights situation if Cristiani caves in and the negotiations collapse. Plainly, it is much too soon to celebrate an end to the Salvadoran tragedy. Yet the opportunity to contemplate its conclusion provided by the negotiations and by the establishment of ONUSAL is cause for some cheer.

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ARTICLES.

LETTER FROM THE PHILIPPINES

Steamrollered One More Time

SUSAN BLAUSTEIN

Manila

With one fearful volcanic blast, Mount Pinatubo has succeeded where both Filipino nationalists and hard-nosed U.S. diplomats had failed: in, respectively, forcing the United States out of Clark Air Base, America's Pacific perch since 1901; and in persuading Philippine negotiators to grant the United States continued use of Subic Naval Base for far more time and less money than they had originally demanded. The agreement reached in mid-July followed fourteen months of contentious negotiations between the United States and its former colony, which, although independent for forty-five years, still harbors a self-destructive mixture of resentment and envy toward its onetime ruler.

The sprawling and fabulously outfitted bases, America's largest overseas, have always been two things Filipinos had that the United States wanted; and Filipinos knew it. Every top Philippine leader since the 1930s has played that card, to exact preferential U.S. trade quotas and military and development assistance in exchange for free rein at Clark and Subic. For the past few years Philippine Foreign Secretary Raul Manglapus gave every indication that he would pull out that same ace this time around. But when bilateral discussions began in earnest, neither Manglapus, as chief negotiator, nor Philippines President Corazon Aquino could decide whether the U.S. bases should stay or go. As late as nine months into the talks, the Philippine side still had no position. Nationalism has long been equated here with getting rid of the Americans, once and for all. But the dreaded cost to the Philippine economy of throwing out the U.S. troops gave these two leaders cold feet.

Confused by the seemingly contradictory attractions of money and sovereignty, Cory insisted on "keeping her options open," while Manglapus talked out of both sides of his mouth. But mostly, Manglapus talked money. He dreamed repeatedly of soaking the country's superpower tenant for more than a billion dollars a year in rent, trade and aid. "If the Americans can't afford it, they should go," he fumed. Presumably, sovereignty would be the consolation prize.

Meanwhile, in light of the global Cold Warming and U.S. defense-budget cutbacks, these choice Pacific properties were quickly depreciating in geostrategic value for Pentagon analysts, from "vital and essential" to "important and desirable." By February, when Manglapus finally articulated a position in the form of an $825 million price tag, the Philippine side had already lost most of its leverage.

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The Pentagon, wiser from its Persian Gulf war experience and determined to be prepared for the new world disorder, began making noises late last winter about the declining utility of large overseas bases when smaller, mobile units had proved more rapidly deployable and cost-effective. American troop strength is being reduced worldwide, including a Pacific force drawdown of 12,000 servicemen and women in 1991-92, to be followed by another in 1993-94. Congress, faced with the closure of dozens of domestic bases, seemed unlikely to vote fat new appropriations in exchange for retaining the Philippine facilities—particularly with Aquino herself equivocating about continued U.S. presence and support.

On top of Washington's misgivings, Mount Pinatubo spewed more than a cubic mile of volcanic ash, which severely damaged Subic, rendered Clark virtually useless as an air base and instantly turned a touchy real estate deal into a fire sale. "A heavy dose of reality entered the situation," reported a U.S. participant in the negotiations, explaining why he thought the Philippine side accepted a far lower figure than it originally demanded. "There was the sense that they should have closed this deal several months ago, that any bargaining power they might have had was quickly slipping away."

But the desire to close a new deal on the bases was far from unanimous here. The raucous domestic debate has endlessly recycled a wide range of issues, from constitutional guarantees of a nuclear-free Philippines to prostitution and the spread of AIDS in towns near the facilities. Leftist groups and right-wing rebel soldiers have regularly issued diatribes decrying "the U.S.-Aquino Puppet Regime," and have respectively threatened widespread strikes and violent coups should the bases be allowed to remain in American hands. The business community has lobbied quietly for a generous extension of what it considers a "stabilizing" U.S. presence, and in the Philippine Senate, where a two-thirds ratification of the accord is constitutionally mandated, obstreperous lawmakers have vowed to veto every proposal either country has put forward.

Aquino, anxious to please all sides during her first five years in office, repeatedly refused to raise her voice above this din by stating a position. Her persistent coyness made it hard for her negotiating panel to know exactly what it could bargain for, and made room for festering internecine policy disputes that further undermined her negotiators' credibility, as well as that of her own weak government.

Had Aquino actually taken a stand early on—either to throw the United States out, so that Filipinos could finally perceive their nation as fully sovereign, or to milk the Pentagon's then-keen desire to retain the facilities for all the greenbacks she could get—she might have pre-empted at least some of the bitterness surrounding the debate. Certainly, had she opted at the outset to let the United States remain, she would have landed her country a better deal than it was able to get in the shadow of Mount Pinatubo. Instead, and perhaps disastrously for her compatriots' self-image, Aquino allowed the Filipino left and the United States to determine the parameters of the discourse on the bases.

For years the left has enjoyed a monopoly on the issue of

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sovereignty, which it has consistently defined as narrowly as the "U.S. Out Now!" placards that bedeck anti-bases rallies here. Few in government ever suggested that perhaps there might be good, even nationalistic reasons to keep the bases around for a while. Before Pinatubo, only Aquino's former defense secretary, Fidel Ramos, seemed willing to argue this case. "Frankly, we do not yet have the capability to meet even our minimum needs for external security," Ramos admitted. "We are not less nationalistic, nor less Filipino, if . . . in the exercise of our sovereign will, we allow for a period of continued U.S. presence, for our people's benefit and our national interest."

A majority of Filipinos has consistently wanted the United States to stay. As September's expiration of the current basing agreement drew closer and it became clear that their debt-ridden government could in no way afford to take over the facilities, more Filipinos came to accept a gradual phase-out of the American presence, simply to buy time and save money. A March survey showed that in Manila, home to by far the highest concentration of anti-bases advocates, 84 percent of those polled preferred that the United States remain at least another six to ten years. Finally, after Pinatubo's violent awakening left 600 dead, more than 300,000 homeless, 600,000 jobless and more than $500 million in estimated damages, for many Filipinos "the national interest" suddenly necessitated cutting some sort of deal with the United States, even if the terms fell far short of Manglapus's pre-eruption pipe dream.

In fact, U.S. compensation for the bases will amount to far more than the annual $203 million guaranteed by the agreement. Philippine negotiators are eyeing $773 million a year, including excess U.S. military equipment, development and food aid, trade access to U.S. markets and help in securing concessional loans. The American panel, headed by chief negotiator Richard Armitage, has consistently refused to attach figures to the non-appropriated portions of the deal, and members have privately referred to the Philippine panel's high-end calculations as "Raul's funny money."

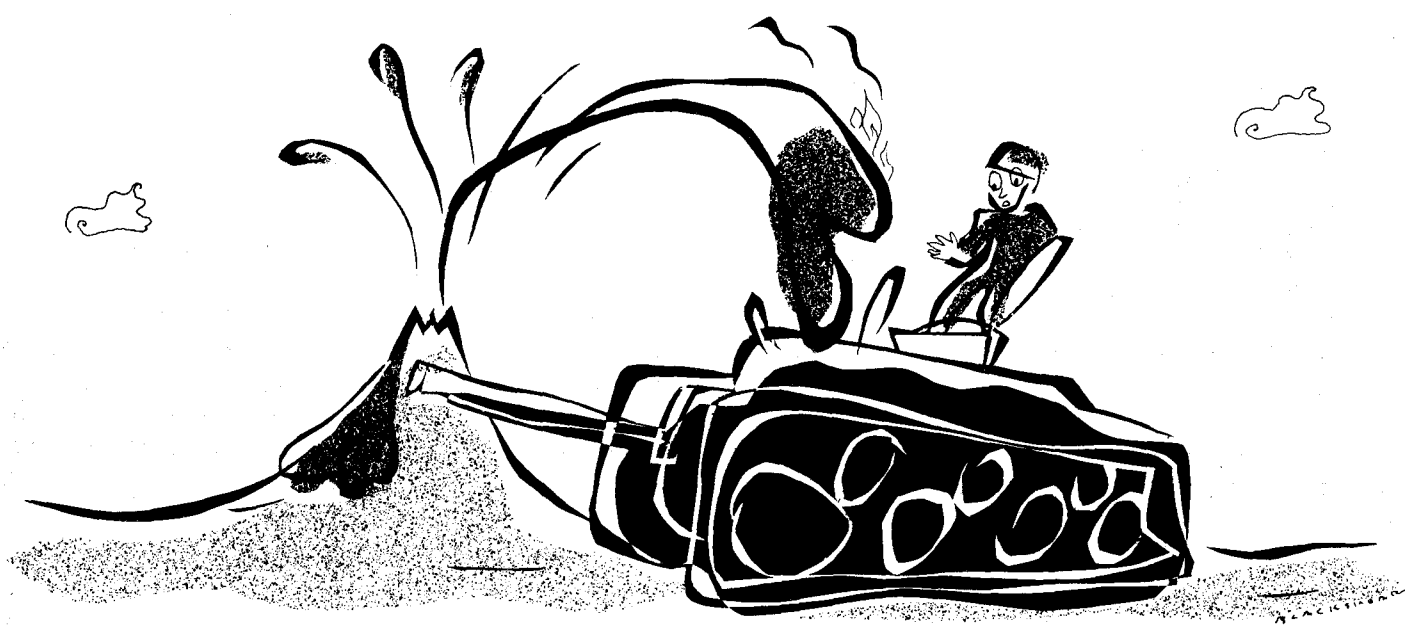
"They can do whatever they want with the figures," shrugged a U.S. official close to the talks. "Armitage was sent out here to negotiate a security agreement. Manglapus is the one who brought up a whole umbrella of other items, as a way to sell it to the [Philippine] Senate. They're putting a price tag on all relations between the two countries."

Inside accounts of sparring between the two countries' top negotiators, who themselves might have been issued straight from central casting, reveal the current U.S.-Philippine relationship in all its vestigial colonial shades. Armitage, easily twice Manglapus's girth and weight, is described by colleagues as a "bright, tough, blunt straight shooter" who "bench-presses 460 pounds before breakfast." His Philippine counterpart, a wiry, slightly precious 73-year-old, is a former C.I.A. protégé who spent many of the Marcos years in American exile, where he composed *Yankee Panky*, a musical satirizing U.S. policy toward the Philippines.

Every few months the shiny-pated American would barrel into town, raring for an agreement; each time, Manglapus demanded more money. No-nonsense "Rich" quickly tired of "Raul's" braying that America would have to cough up big bucks to keep its precious bases here, and accused Manglapus of stooping to "cash-register diplomacy." Manglapus bristled at the insult but nevertheless came back with his $825 million, "take-it-or-leave-it" package of cash, perks and an irrevocable U.S. exit by 1998, the centennial of America's usurpation of the colonial mantle from Spain. The U.S. counteroffer was $360 million, not counting the perks.

"This is it, Raul," said one U.S. diplomat, in imaginary conversation with Manglapus. "There is no more money. If you would like some whistles and bells [to help sell the treaty to the Philippine Senate], we will help you try to find some."

Manglapus and his colleagues finally conjured enough promises of American whistles and bells to feel good about the prospects of Senate ratification, and by early June the two sides had ironed out most of their differences. Then, when Pinatubo blew, Manglapus insisted his country had "suffered more" from the eruption than the United States, and he demanded even more money for "the Job of Asia." But when he realized the United States was abandoning Clark he quickly bit on Armitage's bare-bones offer for Subic and loudly



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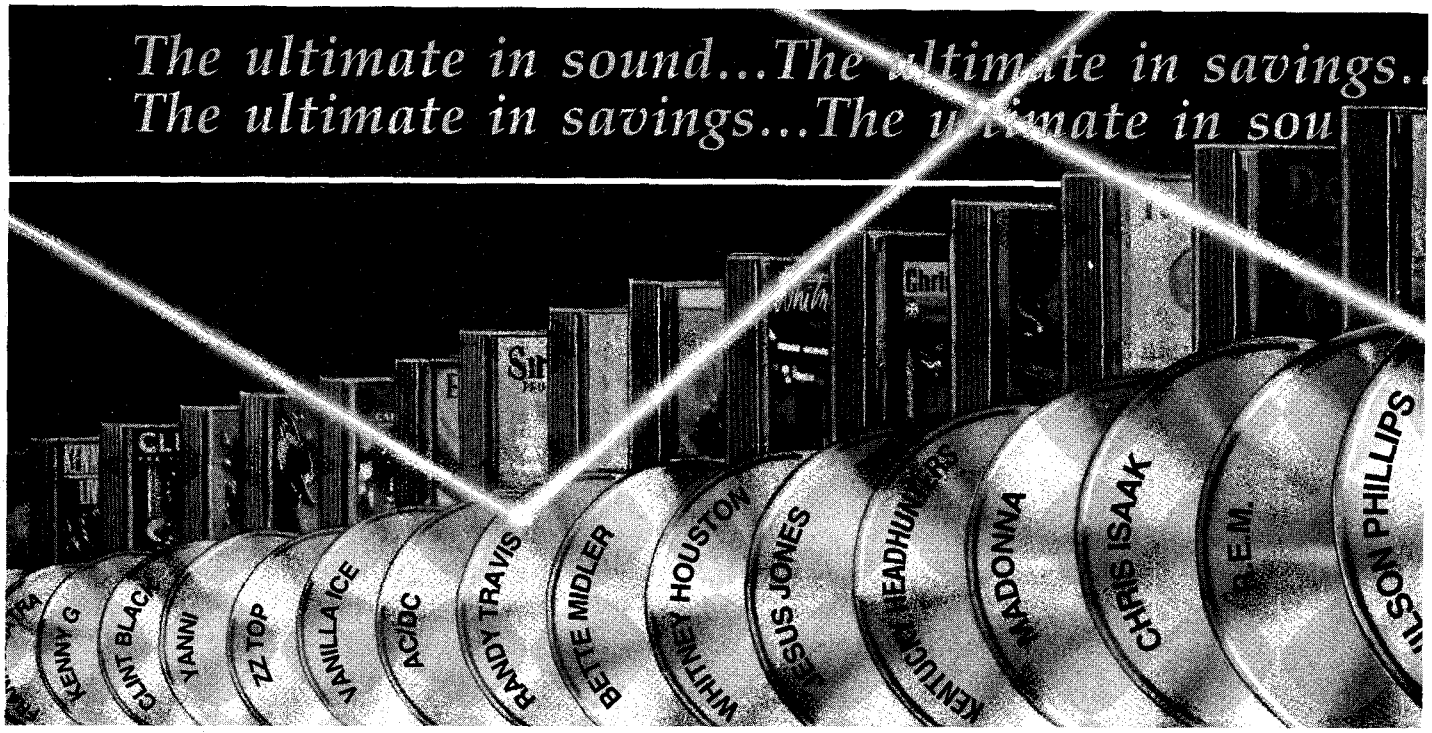

Chris Isaak: Heart Shaped World (Reprise) **73735**

Extreme: Pornograffitti (A&M) **43557**

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The Best Of Bob Marley: Legend (Island) **53521**

Black Box: Dreamland (RCA) **84063**

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Dolly Parton, Linda Ronstadt, Emmylou Harris: Trio (Warner. Bros.) **14804**

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Jackson Browne: *The Pretender* (Elektra) **10848**

Leon Redbone: Sugar (Private Music) **62325**

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played up the whistles and bells to seduce a dubious Senate.

For several days, the evening news showed Raul clinching the agreement with an emphatic handshake and tight, left-handed grip on Rich's right bicep. But Filipinos had little doubt about who had strong-armed whom.

Despite the diplomatic hullabaloo, the U.S. bases mean little to most of the 64 million Filipinos simply trying to live in this impoverished agrarian archipelago, where squabbling, oligarchic legislative and executive branches preside indifferently over completely ineffectual population and land-reform programs, xenophobic and oligopolistic economic policies, and the unimpeded rape of Philippine forests, mineral deposits and coastline. Few of Aquino's promises have borne fruit. For the ordinary Filipino, nothing has changed.

'Quite a lot of Filipinos were willing to overlook their pride, so long as we were getting $700 million to a billion.'

"Our position has always been an ostrich position," laments political analyst Teodoro Benigno, Aquino's former press secretary. "Our leadership is not doing what needs to be done to cope with the major problems of the Philippines, like the poverty gap. We simply don't have the political will."

Aquino must somehow muster the will to corral the Senate into ratifying the new accord. American officials anticipate "an uphill battle," complete with "shouts of betrayal and great gnashing of teeth." So far, most senators have threatened to reject the agreement in its current form. They may do so, if only to save face, wring a few more perks out of Armitage and show Aquino who's boss. But political observers here believe that many will soon come around for fear of losing either Cory's support in next year's elections or that of voters reluctant to turn up their noses at a steady ten-year stream—even a trickle—of American assistance for their beleaguered country.

For thoughtful Filipinos, the greatest hidden cost of the accord could be a loss in self-esteem over the way the negotiations were handled. Armed with a striking propensity for self-flagellation, many have already started berating themselves, their leaders and their national character for succumbing to yet another raw deal favoring their big white brother. Manglapus et al. emerged from eight grueling rounds of talks without much money or a clearer understanding that Philippine honor exists independent of a U.S. presence, and of how much the Philippines can charge for that presence. Once again, the price tag might have lent dignity to the sellout.

"Quite a lot of Filipinos were willing to overlook their nationalistic pride, so long as we were getting $700 million to a billion," insisted Benigno. "But at $203 million," this former Cabinet secretary sighed, "it is very hard to make that jibe with your pride." □

THE ECONOMY

Recovery? Not by A Long Shot

DOUG HENWOOD

Conventional indicators, hopefully invoked by boosters from Wall Street, the media and the Bush Administration, are announcing the end of the 1990-91 recession. The message is that prosperity lurks just around the corner. It doesn't.

The slump that officially began in July 1990 has been odd by modern standards. As the Bank for International Settlements, the central bankers' club, put it in its recent annual report, the slump was (or is, depending on your perspective) "atypical in not having been initiated by a rise in real interest rates, strong wage pressures or excessive inventories." On the contrary, the Federal Reserve had been pushing rates down since early 1989, real wages had been declining since 1973 (as they continue to do) and business inventories have been more tightly managed than ever. Given this unusual pedigree, there's no reason to expect the recovery to begin with the vigorous thrust typical of previous business cycles.

One reason vigor would be surprising is that fiscal policy has turned quite restrictive. State and local governments are cutting spending, increasing taxes and laying off workers. In addition, the federal deficit has lost its stimulative punch. In the early and mid-1980s, interest payments were relatively insignificant, so most of the borrowed money was injected into the real economy. In 1990, however, these payments were more than half again as large as the deficit, thus tax money is being drawn away from productive uses and delivered into the hands of bondholders. As Richard Koo argues in the May/June issue of *The International Economy*, the deficit now does little more than redistribute income to the rich.

Another reason is the persistent "credit crunch," the inability of all but the bluest-chip customers to get a loan at any price [see Henwood, "Crunch Crunch," April 23, 1990]. Many of the institutions that lent to marginal corporate borrowers have vaporized (the hot-shot S&Ls and the junk-mongers making the most dramatic disappearance), and surviving creditors are reluctant to lend to anyone but the government. Since March 1990, U.S.-owned banks have shrunk their commercial and industrial loan portfolios by $29.2 billion, while increasing their holdings of government bonds by $64.1 billion.

Gazing on such data, mainstream politicians and analysts draw a common conclusion: We need more loans, cheaper loans. Credit may be cheaper than it was a year ago, but it's not easy to get. Spirited lending, easy-money partisans in the Administration and Congress agree, will end the recession, and prosperity can be declared. Although too discreet to say it, they're confessing that the economy can't survive having the likes of Michael Milken and Charles Keating in jail.

Doug Henwood is the editor of Left Business Observer.

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This isn't an ordinary business cycle recession that can be quickly cured by plentiful loans. Deprived of credit, the economy is forced to rely on its own meager resources. According to Donald Straszheim, an economist with Merrill Lynch, by the end of the 1990s the economy's potential growth rate will be a wretched 1.8 percent a year. Potential growth rates are important because they are a theoretical maximum capacity; when pushed beyond this limit—a limit set by low productivity growth—inflation is likely to rise, prompting the Fed to a quick crackdown. Even if these figures are statisticians' fantasies, central bankers believe in them. Straszheim's estimate is on the low side; the International Monetary Fund's guess is a more optimistic 2.6 percent, exceeding only Britain's rate in the Group of Seven. Either figure would make the 1990s the most sluggish decade since the 1930s, when growth averaged 1.9 percent. By contrast, G.N.P. grew an average of 3.8 percent a year in the 1960s, the Golden Age of American capitalism.

Of course, it may seem old-fashioned to mourn sluggish growth rates these days when one of growth's byproducts, ecological disaster, has become as routine as subway stabbings. But as credit market analyst James Grant likes to say, the United States is "capitalized for prosperity." Our financial, government and corporate structures need rapid growth or else they produce bankruptcies and fiscal crises.

At the root of these dismal projections is the fact that, outside of the shrinking manufacturing sector, worker productivity has virtually stopped growing. What economic growth we had in the 1980s was largely the result of harder work and longer hours for a declining real wage—a reversal of everything that advanced capitalism is supposed to stand for. Of course, overwork not only makes people tense and violent, it hurts them. From 1983, the recent low, to 1989, the latest year reported, the number of workdays lost to occupational injuries is up 35 percent.

Every month the government publishes an estimate of the total number of hours worked throughout the economy. Dividing the real (inflation-adjusted) G.N.P. by this figure produces a dollar estimate of what all this work effort yields. In the 1950s and 1960s, real G.N.P. per hour worked grew an average of 1.5 percent a year. From 1988 to 1990 real hourly output actually fell.

The unemployment line surely counts as one of the sharpest images of capitalism's failings, but over the past twenty years an image of the workhouse has earned a place by its side. Long-term mass joblessness hasn't disappeared, but more people are working longer hours for pay than at any time in our history (though the recession has pruned these indices a bit from their 1990 peaks). "For pay" is an important qualification, since paid labor isn't the only productive or tiring kind. Wages for Housework, an international group whose name neatly summarizes its agenda, estimates that full-time housewives who are mothers of young children work ninety-two hours a week. This work keeps the world going, but economists treat it as unproductive labor beneath their notice.

According to a study by two Harvard economists, Laura Leete-Guy and Juliet Schor, to be published by the Economic Policy Institute this fall, the number of unprovided hours of work—hours not on offer to those who want them—has more than tripled over the past twenty years, although the adult population increased by less than 40 percent. The portion of the labor force that is thus "constrained"—unemployed or able to find only part-time work—has doubled since 1969.

At the same time, the 85 percent of the labor force that isn't constrained is toiling more, an average of 138 hours a year longer in paid employment in 1989 than 1969, or three and a half average workweeks. According to Leete-Guy and Schor, counting paid and unpaid labor, men are working seventy-two hours a year longer; women, 287. This intensification of work has been virtually unknown in industrialized countries since Marx wrote the first volume of *Capital*.

Underlying these slavish trends are two major failings, a torpid rate of productive investment and the undereducation of the U.S. work force. Although our schools' failings are hardly news, measures of their failure are always good for a chill. According to surveys cited by the Department of Education, only 8 to 13 percent of the adult population is fully literate in English. Even if you assume that the entire non-English-speaking population is fully literate in its native languages, the range rises only to 19 to 24 percent. Figures on the disgraceful performance of the investing class are also damning. Despite the loving treatment accorded to capital over the past fifteen years, business investment in plant and equipment (excluding depreciation) is the weakest it's been since the Depression and World War II. Net investment by all levels of government is a ludicrous 0.3 percent of G.N.P., less than a fifth the rate prevailing in the 1960s and a twentieth of the current Japanese level. Not that there's a shortage of investable capital in the United States; an average of $1 trillion a day passes through the electronic network connecting the country's major banks. Since five days of this pace of money-spinning would finance the entire U.S. G.N.P., and a month would

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easily exceed the total global output, it's safe to conclude that almost all of these transactions are purely speculative.

While everyone is busy celebrating the American Way, no one seems to notice just how our economy is failing—and an economy that delivers twenty years of harder work for less pay is failing badly. In the face of such structural rot, George Bush has nothing to offer but a highway scheme and a capital gains tax cut, and Congressional Democrats timidly proffer an extension of unemployment benefits. More highways will only choke us sooner, the tax cut will only swell the bank wires a little fatter, and extended benefits will not reach the inmates of our workhouse economy or the chronically unemployed. Without a radical departure from business as usual, more decay and drudgery await all but the most privileged. □

U.S. AND NORTH KOREA

Time for a Thaw?

CHARLES WILLIAM MAYNES

United States policy on the Korean peninsula resembles a mastodon trapped in ice. The Soviet Union has opened up official relations with South Korea. China has opened a commercial office in Seoul. Japan has entered into normalization talks with North Korea. Only the United States refuses to join the other major powers in reaching out aggressively to both Koreas, which remain locked in a formal state of war.

In a minimal concession, Washington has begun a policy dialogue with North Korea in Beijing, but U.S. officials themselves acknowledge privately that it is being carried on at a level so low that nothing can change. Washington has eased travel barriers somewhat between the two countries, but because of U.S. currency restrictions only a few scholars and former officials can benefit. It has made the gesture of permitting the export of goods that meet basic human needs, such as medicines, but because North Korea lacks dollars, trade in even those limited categories is virtually nonexistent.

On January 17 Assistant Secretary of State for East Asian and Pacific Affairs Richard Solomon spelled out U.S. policy on improvement of relations with North Korea. Before there could be any major breakthrough, Solomon said, Washington wanted "progress in the South-North dialogue, concluding an N.P.T. [Non-Proliferation Treaty] safeguards agreement, returning Korean War remains, ending anti-U.S. propaganda, agreeing to military confidence-building measures, including restraint in the sale of arms abroad, and ceasing support for terrorism." The order of the list is instructive. It effectively grants South Korea a veto over U.S. policy, since over the years the South has been as guilty as the North of repeatedly reversing positions whenever it seemed that some real progress in the North-South dialogue might take place. Washington claims the list is not a set of preconditions but it acknowledges that "we and *our South Korean ally* [emphasis added] do expect clear signs" that North Korea has changed.

In May, at a gathering of U.S. and Korean scholars and former officials in Seoul, no one on either side contested a charge by a Korean-American scholar that South Korea held such a veto. Privately, U.S. officials do not contest the assertion that Washington follows Seoul's lead on Korean issues, presumably in the belief that all Communist states are now certain to fall and there is therefore no reason to offer "concessions" to one of the world's most totalitarian regimes.

Some might also justify the continuing U.S. cold war posture in North Asia by recalling the Korean War. The North, after all, had primary responsibility in unleashing that war, which led to the death of more than 4 million, or twice the number who died in the Vietnam War. Although Pyongyang has participated in no terrorist acts recently, it is believed responsible for the bombing assassination of several members of the South Korean Cabinet in Burma some years ago. North Korea is selling military equipment, including ballistic missiles, to the volatile Middle East, and its past reluctance to sign and implement a full-scope nuclear safeguards agreement with the International Atomic Energy Agency (I.A.E.A.) has persuaded a growing number of U.S. officials that it may be developing a nuclear-weapons capability.

In addition, its leader, Kim Il Sung, while a legitimate nationalist hero to many Koreans because of his resistance to the Japanese occupation, has created the greatest cult of personality the modern world has ever known—one so zany that it probably has discouraged U.S. analysts from looking for opportunities to engage Pyongyang. A foreigner who hears that "the birds sing his praise and the animals dance in appreciation of his benevolence, grace and wisdom" is not quite sure how to react. But another side to Kim's rule is his achievement in rebuilding a country that U.N. forces, primarily American, completely destroyed during the Korean War. North Korea is not a shabby Albania. Although it lags significantly behind the South, it shocks the foreign visitor, who expects neither the beauty of Pyongyang nor North Korea's technical achievements, given the regime's extraordinary isolation.

Some in Washington may see North Korea's current problems as another reason to retain a policy of confrontation. Last year's drought apparently reduced the harvest some 50 to 60 percent, and the daily rice ration per person has reportedly been cut from 700 to 250 grams a day. The lack of rainfall also dried up the reservoirs on which the country depends for hydroelectric power, causing severe shortages. Major buildings turn off the electricity for long periods during the day.

Meanwhile, the Soviet Union has informed the North Koreans that trade relations will have to be put on a hard-currency basis. North Korea, while it produces a wide array of modern industrial products, can offer few that meet world standards, other than some weapons. So the change in Soviet policy is intensifying shortages, particularly of fuel, since the Soviet Union has provided North Korea with most of its petroleum. Even near military centers one hears no aircraft

Charles William Maynes, editor of Foreign Policy, *recently spent two weeks in North and South Korea as part of a study mission of the Asia Society. The views he expresses are his own.*

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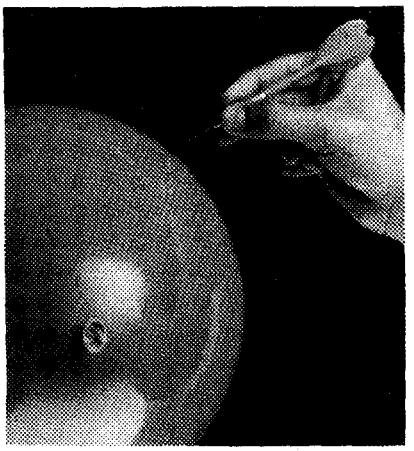

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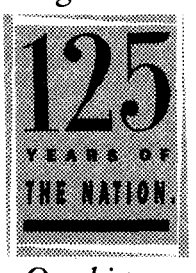

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in the sky and sees few vehicles on the roads. China has told the North Koreans that it is not in a position to compensate them for the reduction in Soviet aid.

In short, North Korea is being squeezed hard. Some might argue that existing pressures and new ones can break the back of the regime and lead to its overthrow, as happened in Eastern Europe. Indeed, a policy of pressure seems already to have produced changes in North Korean behavior. On two separate occasions this past spring, senior North Korean officials, meeting with a group of American scholars and former officials, hinted at military action if South Korea pressed ahead with its desire to enter the U.N. this autumn; then in late May Pyongyang announced that it would also join. After refusing to sign a safeguards agreement with the I.A.E.A. unless the United States also withdraws any nuclear weapons it may have in South Korea, North Korean authorities recently reopened negotiations with the agency, probably after learning that they could not normalize relations with Japan—and, like South Korea, receive reparations for oppression suffered during Japan's colonial occupation—until they had a safeguards agreement in place. In March Pyongyang even signed an agreement with South Korean companies to exchange $35 million of anthracite coal and cement for 100,000 tons of rice.

Why not allow these pressures to build and try to bring another Communist regime to its knees? The answer is that cornered nations can be dangerous. When Fidel Castro thought the Kennedy Administration was about to invade Cuba and destroy his regime, he urged the Soviet Union in such an event to launch a nuclear attack against the United States. (We know this from letters that Castro himself released to the press on November 23, 1990: "If [the Americans] manage to carry out an invasion of Cuba . . . then that would be the moment to eliminate this danger forever. . . . However harsh and terrible the solution, there would be no other.")

North Korean officials, if anything, have even more reason to be suspicious of the United States, and they have greater ability to react militarily. Korea remains one of the most heavily militarized regions in the world, with more than 1 million troops deployed on both sides of the demilitarized zone. Meanwhile, the North is going through a major transition as Kim Il Sung, now 79, must be anxious to insure that his mad political masterpiece does not collapse shortly after his death.

Even from the perspective of a hard-line cold warrior, however, an early collapse of the regime in the North may not be desirable. Officials in the South, who for years have ardently wished for the destruction of their Northern enemy, now fear early reunification. They point out that West Germany, demographically four times as large as East Germany, is having enormous difficulties in absorbing its Communist brother; South Korea has only twice as many people as North Korea and is a much poorer country than Germany. If stepped-up pressures did bring reunification suddenly and unexpectedly it could turn out to be a disaster for both Koreas.

Current trends in the North offer another reason for the United States to adjust its policy toward Pyongyang. North Korea is abandoning its traditional policy of autarky and defiance. North Korean officials openly admit to visitors that they are far behind the South; they know that the South's G.N.P. is five to ten times larger and that the gap between North and South is growing. Given these trends, why should the outside world take the risk of baiting the North Koreans, who have made it clear to a growing number of foreign visitors that they want to normalize their relations with the rest of the world, including the United States, and that they are willing to make compromises to achieve this normalization? It would seem only prudent to explore at a higher level what the North Koreans are prepared to do.

North Korea's entry into the U.N. this fall offers the kind of excuse for a policy change that major powers often seem to need. The United States should resolve that although it will continue to coordinate its policy toward North Korea with Seoul, it will no longer accord South Korea a veto (just as the Soviet Union did not accord Pyongyang a veto over Soviet policy when Moscow opened up diplomatic relations with Seoul). Secretary of State James Baker, during his annual consultations in New York on the occasion of the General Assembly session, should meet with his North Korean counterpart. A senior official from Washington should enter into regular discussions with the North Korean Ambassador at the U.N. The United States should announce that it will henceforth permit American companies to trade with North Korea in nonstrategic goods (this step might seem like an empty gesture, but when Japan begins to pay North Korea massive reparations, it could have commercial effect). Once North Korea has signed a safeguards agreement with the I.A.E.A., Washington should open an embassy in Pyongyang.

The principal reason the United States should want a high-level dialogue with Pyongyang is the nuclear threat. Although U.S. intelligence officials disagree on the evidence, some believe that North Korea is building a reprocessing plant to prepare weapons-grade material for nuclear weapons, which logically the North Koreans might see as an equalizer to the South's growing economic and conventional military strength. In private conversations North Korean officials contend firmly that they are not developing nuclear weapons, but they say that if Washington has concerns, its officials should sit down with their North Korean counterparts.

American nuclear strategy in Korea is a relic of the cold war. Faced with what it thought were Communist hordes whose numbers the United States and its allies could not match, Washington adopted a policy in both Europe and Asia of threatening to be the first to use nuclear weapons in the event of conflict: Nuclear weapons were America's technological equalizer to the enemy's conventional superiority.

In Europe the melting away of the Soviet threat has persuaded NATO to abandon this first-use doctrine and to proclaim officially that nuclear arms are now "truly weapons of last resort." It is time to adjust the doctrine in Korea as well, where the South is more populous and prosperous than the North. But the United States should go further. In return for formal, verified North Korean commitments never to develop nuclear weapons (the North is expected to take a big step in this direction when it signs the long-awaited I.A.E.A. safeguards agreement this month) the United States should withdraw all ground-based nuclear weapons from South Korea

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and should join with the Soviet Union and China in renouncing the intention of ever using nuclear weapons on the Korean peninsula.

Trying to stop the spread of Communism in Korea should no longer be Washington's key objective, since that movement no longer has any attraction. Rather, the United States should edge North Korea into the modern world, promote the complete denuclearization of the peninsula and encourage both Koreas to behave like responsible powers. The time to move is now. □

CHALLENGES TO ARAFAT

The P.L.O. Grapples With New Realities

STEPHEN HUBBELL

Tunis

The State of Palestine conducts its daily business from a few dozen squat, white-stucco "safe houses" scattered about Tunis's wealthier suburbs. If the fragrant, bougainvillea-lined streets of Sidi Bou Said, where senior officials of the Palestine Liberation Organization reside, or the dramatic seaside overlooks of La Marsa seem unlikely spots from which to manage an uprising 1,500 miles away, recent history has left the Palestinians little alternative. The P.L.O. came here en masse in 1983 after expulsion from Beirut and Damascus, to which its members had fled more than a decade earlier to escape annihilation at the hands of Jordan's King Hussein.

Today, the main fear pervading the citadels of P.L.O. authority is of marginalization and irrelevance. The malaise that has taken hold over the past year is convincing many of the organization's detractors that the twenty-three-year rule of its grizzled patriarch, Yasir Arafat, may be nearing its end. Even the P.L.O.'s spokesmen, whose pronouncements have lost the brash, pro-Iraq boosterism they carried during the early days of the Persian Gulf crisis, speak sullenly of the future, disparaging both the proposed Middle East peace conference, from which the P.L.O. seems certain to be excluded, and their sometime Arab allies, whose resolve to press for a just solution to the Palestinian conflict appears to be flagging.

"Yasir Arafat has a lot of explaining to do," says Khalid al-Hassan, a leading official in the P.L.O. and the man who has emerged in the past few weeks as the chairman's chief rival and possible successor. "He has to justify his policy in the gulf war, in the peace process, on many things." But, Hassan concedes, "he is still the symbol of the movement."

In the months since the end of the gulf war, the P.L.O. has confronted a barrage of assaults that would have long ago felled a less durable organization. In Kuwait, dozens of Palestinians suspected of cooperating with the Iraqi occupiers have been summarily executed, and hundreds more face lengthy jail sentences or deportation; in south Lebanon earlier this summer, Lebanese military forces succeeded in disarming Palestinian militias after four days of pointless combat in which at least seventy Palestinians were killed; and in Israeli-occupied Arab territory, the three-and-a-half-year-old *intifada* shows signs of weakening under the dual burden of military suppression and economic isolation. "I don't know what the world expects from the P.L.O.," lamented Jamil Hilal, the director of the P.L.O.'s information bureau, on the eve of its latest battlefield defeat, the rout of its forces in south Lebanon on July 3. "I don't think we have any more cards to play."

And although prospects for convening a peace conference with Israel and neighboring Arab states seem brighter than ever, the P.L.O., which has long pushed for such a meeting, is now having to fight to avoid being excluded from the process altogether. At best, the organization will be compelled to endorse a delegation that includes none of its members; at worst, officials fear that Palestinians may have to sit out and observe the proceedings from afar.

The latest chapter in the P.L.O.'s recent catalogue of woes began last August with the fateful decision to back Saddam Hussein against the Americans and their allies. As the architect of that move, Arafat calculated that the political risk posed by offending the pro-Iraq sentiments of the Palestinian rank and file outweighed the more pragmatic effort to court favorable opinion in the West. Even today, in the aftermath of the Iraqi humiliation, few doubt that the chairman did what he had to by supporting Saddam. "Arafat was less militant during the war than his people," says Nabil Shaath, the Cairo-based chair of the Palestine National Council's political committee and a close Arafat adviser. "We all stood with Iraq facing the juggernaut of the Americans. There were obviously some tactical errors during the war—as when Arafat was shown kissing Saddam—but strategically, this was the will of the people."

In so doing, however, Arafat handed Israel an additional excuse for shunning the organization, which most Palestinians recognize as the only one capable of representing them in a peace conference. The prospect of Syria and Jordan—minus the Palestinians—sitting down alongside Israel and negotiating for the return of lost land represents the P.L.O.'s worst nightmare. To avoid being marginalized even further, the P.L.O. is now desperately seeking assurances from Washington that it will be allowed to join the process in some guise after the opening session has concluded.

Evidence of Tunis's weakened organizational grip is appearing on several new and unlikely fronts. In the occupied territories, where Arafat is held in the sort of esteem normally reserved for pop singers and soccer stars, Palestinian activists are clamoring for a more prominent role within the P.L.O. leadership, which is currently dominated by factional chiefs from the diaspora. The ongoing *intifada* and Washington's refusal to deal directly with the P.L.O. have led to the ascendance of a local delegation, led by East Jerusalem resident Faisal Husseini, that operates with a degree of autonomy from Tunis that would have been unthinkable a few years ago. Although the leadership insists that it maintains authority over activists in the territories ("We are in constant and close consultation," says Ahmad Abderrahman, an Arafat spokesper-

Stephen Hubbell is a reporter who lives in Cairo.

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son), reports from Tunis suggest that when Husseini flew to Washington in July for talks with Bush Administration officials, for example, he did so without securing prior approval from Arafat. The P.L.O. executive committee, which comprises the leaders of member organizations and is responsible for making key policy decisions, has frequently had to scramble to maintain the appearance that it is still firmly at the helm. Some observers believe that tensions between the P.L.O. and the leadership in the occupied territories are likely to erupt into open conflict. "The expatriate government that is posing as the national leadership will not be able to maintain control [over the territories] for very much longer," says one Palestinian dissident.

But in a series of marathon meetings starting in late July and continuing into August, the P.L.O. leadership has begun tentatively charting a new course that may dramatically change the direction and character of the Palestinian movement. The emergence of 63-year-old Khalid al-Hassan, a longtime Fatah loyalist whose strong ties to the conservative gulf states appeal to a growing segment of the P.L.O. leadership, as Arafat's main rival within the organization may herald the first major challenge to Arafat's authority in almost a decade.

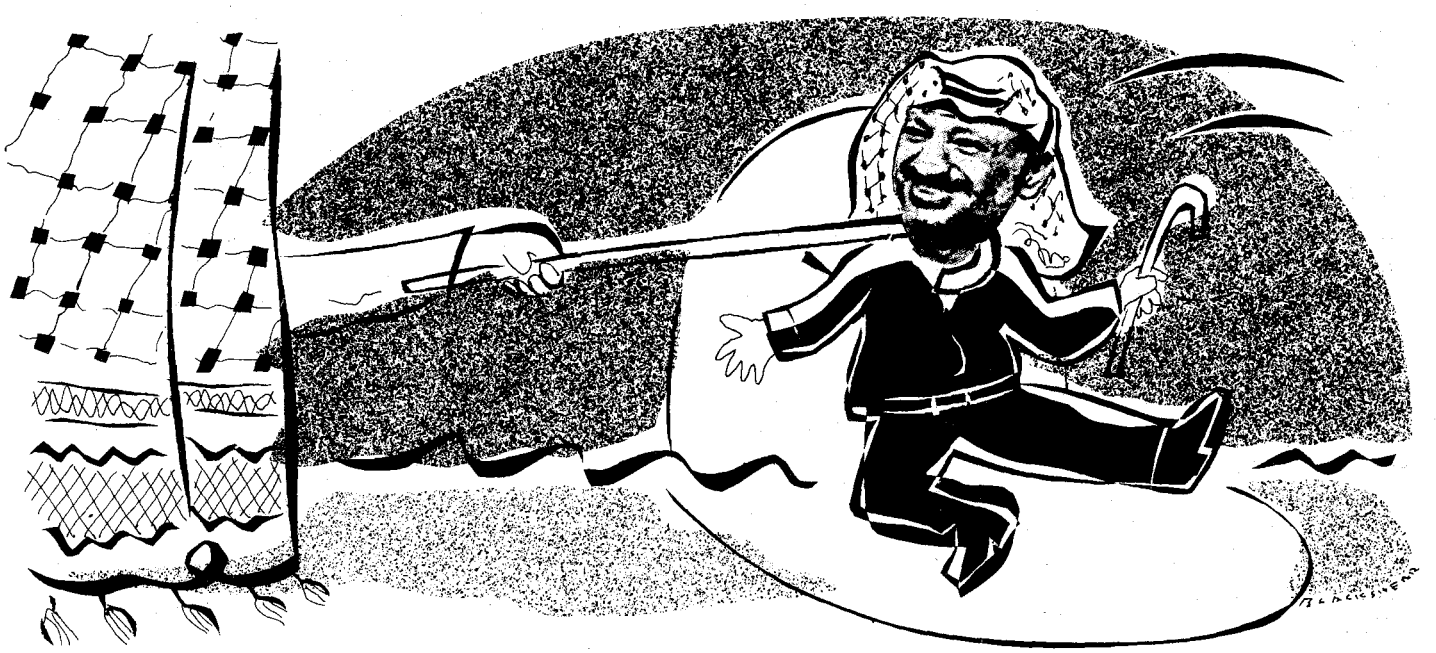
Hassan's ascendancy was presaged in June when his brother Hani was unexpectedly elected to a senior security post within Fatah in a runoff against an Arafat loyalist. Angered by the chairman's overenthusiastic embrace of Saddam and by a string of poor policy decisions, the Hassan brothers and their supporters privately hope to "promote" Arafat out of several of his leadership positions. In June, Khalid circulated a confidential memo—against the wishes of the Tunis leadership—to senior Arab and Western diplomatic officials to gauge support for several of the options being considered by the P.L.O. on the composition of a Palestinian delegation to a peace conference. Khalid, who has long had close ties with Jordan's King Hussein as well as the Saudi royal family, favors confederation of the Palestinian and Jordanian states.

In early August, Khalid al-Hassan embarked on an unofficial mission to Jordan for talks with senior government officials there, presumably concerning the possibility of a joint delegation, a task so sensitive that it may indicate that he is now backed by a majority on the P.L.O. executive committee. Both Hassan and his opponents speak guardedly about his mission in Amman, but sources close to the organization confirm that Hassan has won himself a strategic position from which to influence the formation of the Palestinian delegation.

Hassan's strength within the P.L.O. will be tested in Algiers this month, when the Palestine National Council, the organization's parliament-in-exile, meets for the first time in three years in a historic session to debate its stance toward the peace process. During the gathering, the P.L.O. leadership is certain to be inundated with calls for greater internal democracy, an appeal that Hassan is expected to spearhead. And the most pressing demand of the reformers will be that a broader role should be given to activists from the territories, who are underrepresented at all levels of the P.L.O., largely because Israel has forbidden Palestinians to consult directly with Tunis.

Such a change would threaten the prerogatives of several of the smaller member organizations from the diaspora—like George Habash's Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine and Nayef Hawatmeh's Democratic Front for the Liberation of Palestine—and could thus indirectly strengthen the hand of Al Fatah, Arafat's base and the largest single grouping in the P.L.O. With this goal in mind, some leading figures within Fatah favor a redistribution of power to the territories and to prominent independent Palestinians. "A major segment of the future leadership [of the P.L.O.] will come from the occupied territories," says Nabil Shaath, an advocate of the shift of power to the West Bank and Gaza. "There must be an invigorating resurgence of new blood."

The battle for the loyalties of an increasingly restive population in the occupied territories is fraught with risk and uncertainty, and the Tunis leadership is keenly aware of the high stakes involved. After persistent reports earlier this summer that vigilante killings of suspected Palestinian collaborators in the West Bank and Gaza were soaring out of control, a senior P.L.O. spokesperson in Tunis took the unusual step of publicly censuring young activists for not adhering to es-



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tablished guidelines for punitive executions. "We have a strict system according to which we condemn a collaborator," Bassam Abu Sharif told *The Jerusalem Report* in July. "We warn the person twice. Only if he continues collaborating after the second warning do we put him up before a local court, made up of local lawyers. Even if they find him guilty, the death sentence is not final. It has to be sent to Tunis for authorization."

The fact that many—if not most—of the roughly 400 killings of collaborators that have been carried out since the *intifada* began were unauthorized has clearly become an embarrassment to the Tunis leadership. "Yes, there have been some hasty decisions taken by people inside [the territories]," Abu Sharif told me. "These youths are alienating the Palestinian population, and we will take firm measures against them."

The P.L.O.'s authority in the territories is being questioned most urgently by Islamic fundamentalist groups—like Hamas and the more militant Islamic Jihad—that do not belong to the larger organization but are commanding the loyalty of a growing number of the younger male population. In the eyes of some Islamicists, Husseini and other secular leaders, many of them Christian, have sold out to Tunis and should be silenced. To pre-empt the threat posed by the religious radicals, Tunis has invited Hamas to join the P.L.O., but the group is demanding more seats on the Palestine National Council than the P.L.O. leadership feels it deserves. At the moment, Tunis seems determined not to give in to Hamas's demands. Says one high-ranking P.L.O. official: "The choice has been offered to Hamas: Join us and enjoy the privileges of membership. But if you continue to work against the unified leadership, I think confrontation will be inevitable."

P.L.O. officials fear that if they are excluded from a regional conference and are thus unable to wring meaningful concessions from Israel on exchanging land for peace, their failure will swell the ranks of the more radical and rejectionist religious factions, which have consistently opposed the diplomatic approach and criticized the relative moderation of Arafat and his cohort. "The only [Palestinian] organizations that matter are Fatah and Hamas," says Khalid al-Hassan. "This is a decisive moment. It will be either Islamicism or nationalism, either this or that. If we reach a settlement [with the Israelis], we nationalists will prevail. If not, they will be in control." And in the occupied territories many Palestinians believe that the Shamir government in Israel would like to see Hamas come to the fore, scuttling prospects for peace once and for all.

Khalid al-Hassan's open antipathy toward the Arafat camp, as well as his demands for a democratic restructuring of the P.L.O., are likely to enliven the proceedings in Algiers this month. "I don't think [Hassan] has enough of a following to challenge Arafat successfully," says Jamil Hilal, "but there will be a strenuous effort to make the P.L.O. more effective, more democratic, more dynamic." Despite his unpopularity among most Arafat loyalists, Hassan may be able to capitalize on festering discontent among Palestinians who have long felt excluded from the highest echelons of decision making. "There has always been a demand for better consultation between the P.L.O. and the Palestinian community," one leftist observed, "only now it is much more urgent. The changes ahead of us will be historic." □

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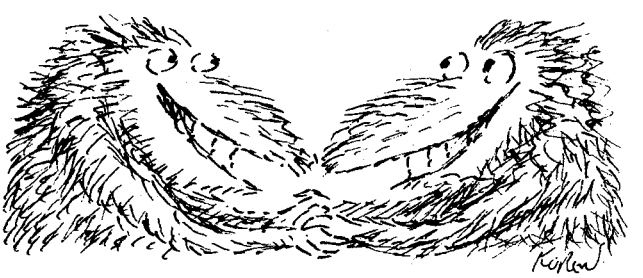

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BOOKS & THE ARTS.

Captain Bly

TED SOLOTAROFF

Recently in these pages Gore Vidal remarked that instead of politics Americans have elections. One sees what he means, but it's not quite on the money, because elections matter mostly to the politicians, their PAC groups and their dwindling party loyalists. For the rest of America, elections are a peculiar form of TV entertainment in which the commercial has become the program. The affiliations and ideologies people care about are elsewhere, in what Theodore Roszak fifteen years ago termed "situational groups," the politics of the personal. "In less than a generation's time," he wrote, "every conceivable form of situational belonging has been brought out of the closet and has forced its grievances and its right to exist upon the public consciousness." He was writing about the mitosis of the counterculture, but his observation was no less prescient about its opposition—the pro-lifers, creationists, apocalyptics, neoconservatives, school vigilantes, et al. There are also the expressive therapeutic groups: The most influential ideology of change in America today is probably that of A.A., not only because it works so dramatically but because it provides a model of psychological and spiritual community, which is what the ethnic, racial, gender, sexual and other situational groups are partly about. The most interesting recent example is the men's movement, a complex phenomenon that appears to derive from A.A., feminism, New Age religion and therapy, environmentalism and the culture and charisma of Robert Bly.

That a poet is the spokesman of a broadly based movement as well as at the top of the charts has, of course, struck many readers but not, I imagine, many poets. They are used to Bly the group leader, publicist, ideologist, translator, mythologist, guru and scold, he having played these roles in the American poetry of the second half of the century, much as Ezra Pound did in that of the first half. Poets are also used to Bly the showman, his hit performance on Bill Moyers's program, which sent the men's movement into media orbit, having been preceded by hundreds of his sold-out poetry readings and seminar star turns.

The fierceness Bly prescribes for staking out male identity has provided much of the energy for his career as a literary radical.

Like most literary careers that last, Bly's has been formed from the ongoing play of oppositions, but his have been particularly intense: Lutheran and pagan, rural and international, reclusive and engaged, austere and grandiose. These contending traits and inclinations have generated Bly's high energy and also created a certain rhythm to his career that makes his present celebrity and function almost predictable. Also they are compacted into a strongly lived life that personalizes the mythopoetic structure and far-out counsel of *Iron John* (Addison-Wesley) and gives the book, for all of its discursiveness and highhandedness, an overall staying power and a kind of charmed ability to hit paydirt about every third page.

Iron John is less about male identity than it is about what Jungians, following John Keats, call "soul-making." Much of Bly's soul has been forged and refined by his relationship with the Wild Man, his favorite name for the tutelary figure in the fairy tale that he unpacks and unpacks, embroiders and embroiders to tell the reader how boys psychically become men and men remain psychically boys.

Bly grew up, as he says, a "Lutheran Boy-god" in Minnesota, being his mother's favorite, and in good Freudian fashion, drawing from that a heightened sense of entitlement as well as a tendency to see the world through her eyes and feel it with her heart, which means he didn't see or feel very much on his own. In Bly's terms his soul or psyche had a lot of conducting "copper" in it, which would come in handy as an editor, critic and translator, and not much of the "iron" of autonomy that he would later have to extract on his own from the mines of the archetypal warrior king in himself. In short, he grew up "soft," like the males of today to whom *Iron John* is mainly addressed. Bly's brother appears to have been his father's son, the one who took up the family occupation of farming, the hairy Esau to his tent-dwelling Jacob. His father was strong, kindly, intensely moral, and alcoholic, creating a particularly poignant remoteness that broods over *Iron John*, as it does in some of Bly's later poetry: "the man in the black coat" who appears only to turn away again and whose haunting absence, along with his mother's haunting presence, has created Bly's lifelong project and process of fathering one's soul, which is his particular contribution to the men's movement.

For the rest, Bly was a well-raised product of Madison, Minnesota, a small plains community with a Norwegian cultural accent. He was properly clean and godly, cheerful and repressed, "asleep in the Law," as he puts it in his major autobiographical poem, "Sleepers Joining Hands." A Lutheran Boy-god who remains in this state is likely to become a minister, his grandiosity put into the service of interpreting doctrines and counseling the flock. Bly has, of course, taken the opposite road, "from the Law to the Legends," as he puts it in *Iron John*, but the deal he apparently made with his psyche is that the nascent preacher has gone with him and adapted to his various stages and purposes.

Bly doesn't talk about his Harvard experience in *Iron John*—he seldom has in a career otherwise rich in self-revelation—but it was a determinate stage in which this wounded Boy-god and naïve "ascender" was both endowed and banished, a literary version of the prince of his fairy tale. Here he is as an editor of the *Harvard Advocate*, reviewing a collection of British poetry edited by Kenneth Rexroth. One sentence tells the tale:

> Perhaps it is unfortunate that Rexroth should have been let loose on the Romantics; there is, I think, a difference between the desire to express personal emotion by increased direct reference to the world of nature, and the desire to

Ted Solotaroff, who recently retired as senior editor at HarperCollins, herewith joins The Nation *as contributing editor. His most recent collection of essays is* A Few Good Voices in My Head *(Harper & Row).*

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overthrow all external discipline of morals of government.

This is, of course, the T.S. Eliot act that many young writers in the postwar era used to put themselves on the cutting edge of modernism. In Bly's case, it suggests that he was turning over in his sleep from the Lutheran law to the Anglican one. The literary air at the time was thick with conservative authority and decorum. It had an archbishop, Eliot; a set of bishops, the New Critics; a martyr, Pound; and lots of acolytes, who were becoming half paralyzed by the dogma that poetry was a hieratic vocation, that the imagination lived, worked and had its being within The Tradition. As Eliot had laid it down, it was mostly Dante and the metaphysical poets, the high Anglicans like himself. The dogma came equipped with Eliot's emphasis on the impersonal, objective image and with a set of literary heresies and fallacies that were meant to nip any revival of Romanticism in the bud.

To subscribe to this ethos typically led a young writer to graduate school or to the pits. Bly chose the latter, having become "overcommitted to what he was not," as Erik Erikson would say, and badly needing to find his way to his own "inner tradition." He ended up in New York, where he spent the next three years being mostly blocked, depressed and poor: the state of "ashes, descent, and grief" that forms a major early stage in his mythic prince's initiation. According to Bly, life reserves this "katabasis" particularly for the grandiose ascender, putting him in touch with the dark, wounded side he has tried to ignore and evade and ministering to the naïveté, passivity and numbness that comes with the apron strings of his entitlement. The road, in short, that leads "from the mother's house to the father's house."

The one poem that Bly published from this period, "Where We Must Look for Help," is based on three types of birds that were sent forth from Noah's ark into the flooded world: the glamorous peaceful dove and the graceful swallows find no land, only the crow does:

> The crow, the crow, the spider-colored crow,
> The crow shall find new mud to walk upon.

As Bly was to tell Deborah Baker, who has written an excellent biographical essay about him, "It was the first time . . . I ran into the idea of the dark side of the personality being the fruitful one." After a year at the Iowa Writers'

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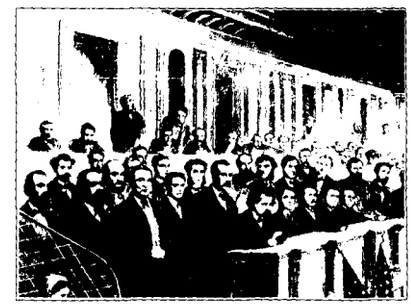

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Workshop, Bly went to live on a farm his father had bought for him, and a year later, while visiting relatives in Norway, he discovered his new mud lying adjacent to his inner tradition.

In primitive societies, as Bly tells us in *Iron John*, the male initiation is viewed as a second birth, with the elders acting as a "male mother." Bly's were first Georg Trakl, a German, and Gunnar Ekelöf, a Swede. From them he began to grasp the subjective, intuitive, "wild" side of modernism as opposed to the objective, rationalist, "domesticated" one. In their work as in that of the French and Hispanic surrealists—Char, Michaux, Jiménez, Vallejo and Lorca, among others—Bly sensed the missing water, the unconscious, for lack of which he believed Anglo-American poetry was suffering vastation. Increasingly dry, ironical, exhausted, remote, it was itself The Wasteland, while the European poets were still fecund, passionate and present. Returning to the family farm, Bly started a magazine, *The Fifties*, to say so as aggressively as possible and to provide translations of the European and Latin American surrealists in three or four languages, as well as to give welcome to his contemporaries who showed signs of new life and put down those who were dead on their feet. Flying a woodcut of Woden as his logo, Bly almost single-handedly led the charge against the reign of the "Old Fathers" in the middle, joined by the New York School on his right and the West Coast Beats on his left. Neither wing was anywhere near as relentless, reductive and brutal as Bly. He was out to deauthorize as well as replace the Eliot-Pound-Tate tradition, stamping on it well into the next generation—Lowell, Berryman, Delmore Schwartz, Jarrell, Karl Shapiro, whomever. In *Iron John* he chides himself for contributing to the decline of "Zeus energy," attributing it to the demons in his father-wound: a false note from someone who has repeatedly insisted that literature advances by generational strife and deplored the absence of adversarial criticism among poets.

Be that as it may, in the late fifties Bly entered his warrior phase, developing the strategy and service to a cause that in *Iron John* distinguish the warrior from the soldier. Though his magazine was known mainly for its demolition jobs, it also blazed, paved and landscaped a new road. Bly wrote many essays that developed his concept of "leaping" and "wild poetry," both in concept and prosody. In "Looking for Dragon Smoke," Bly hooked together a countertradition to the Christian-rational-industrial one that provided a kind of culture of the Wild Man. It begins with *Gilgamesh*, in which the "psychic forces" of an early civilized society created the hairy, primitive Enkidu as the adversary and eventual companion of the golden Gilgamesh (the first harbinger of *Iron John*). After *Beowulf* (Bly's Nordic touchstone) the "dragon smoke" of inspired association with primal memories is not much in evidence until Blake arrives to give the lie to the Enlightenment, as do the associative freedom and "pagan and heretical elements" in his German contemporaries Novalis, Goethe and Hölderlin. With Freud and Jung the unconscious is back in business again, and the romantic/symbolist/surrealist wing of modernism provides Bly with a whole range of leaping, dragon smoke poets from Scandinavia south to Spain and across to Latin America to translate, publish and emulate.

Compared with Trakl's images ("On Golgotha God's eyes opened") or Lorca's ("Black horses and dark people are riding over the deep roads of the guitar"), Bly's own early leaps as a poet did not take him very far inward. About a horse wandering in the moonlight, he wrote: "I feel a joy, as if I had thought/Of a pirate ship ploughing through dark flowers." The poems of his first collection, *Silence in the Snowy Fields*, are noticeably restrained, wishing to be admired for the integrity of their mood, mostly a meditative one: a young pastoral poet getting his act together rather than appearing with snakes in his hair or as a messenger from the deeps.

Then, in the mid-sixties, Bly got caught up in the antiwar movement. He became a leading mobilizer of the literary community and provided one of the great moments in the theater of demonstrations when he gave his National Book Award check for his second collection, *The Light Around the Body*, to a draft resister while on the stage at Lincoln Center. Auden said of Yeats, "Mad Ireland hurt you into poetry"; the Vietnam War hurt Bly into writing the kind of poetry he had been calling for and that in places matched Neruda's in its creeping balefulness. Evoking the fallout of evil that has settled in Minnesota, he ends:

> Therefore we will have to
> Go far away
> To atone
> For the suffering of the stringy-chested
> And the short rice-fed ones, quivering

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In the helicopter like wild animals,
Shot in the chest, taken back to be
questioned.

In the course of writing these poems and of editing a collection of antiwar poetry, Bly developed his concept of the intuitive association to reconnect literature with politics, two realms that most criticism and most experience of their "bloody crossroads," in Lionel Trilling's phrase, counseled to keep apart. Bly's position was an early version of the statement, long before it became cant, that the personal was political. As he put it, "A modern man's spiritual life and his growth are increasingly sensitive to the tone and content of a regime." Since much of our foreign and domestic policy comes from more or less hidden impulses in the American psyche, and because that psyche is in the poet too, "the writing of political poetry is like the writing of personal poetry, a sudden drive by the poet inward."

Along with strengthening his own poetry, Bly's involvement turned him into a performer of it. His high-visibility poetry readings developed into a counter-cultural event, the Lutheran Boy-god and warrior now reappearing as the bard. I first caught his act in the early seventies, when he entered a symposium on literary editing dressed in a serape and tapping a Tibetan drum, as though he were a cross between Neruda and Chögyam Trungpa, the meditation guru Bly studied with. After his poetry reading, complete with primitive masks, the other Bly, the literary caretaker, appeared on the panel of editors—sharp, shrewd and no less dominating.

He supported himself by his public appearances; otherwise he remained on his farm, tending to his chores as an editor, publisher, critic and poet and using his solitude to nourish "the parts that grow when we are far from the centers of ambition." Through the writings of Jung, Joseph Campbell, James Hillman and other psychic/cultural explorers he developed his encyclopedic command of the great heuristic myths, legends and folklore that understand us, concentrating on those that involve the female side. He gave lectures on Freud and Jung, as well as on Grimms' Fairy Tales, in the church basement in Madison, his trial by fire in making the esoteric vivid and meaningful to the public. He turned from America's shadow to his own, producing eleven collections of poems, most of them inward, associative, naked—Bly fully join-

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ing the tradition he had been staking out. He put out only one issue of *The Seventies*, a noticeably temperate one. The warrior was giving way to the gardener and lover, two roles that Bly lived through and that noticeably "moistened" his poetry in the eighties. They also provided two more stages in the process of male initiation that he took into his work with the men's movement. So did certain personal experiences of shame, guilt and loss, along with the aging process through which the holds that a father and son put on each other can turn into a yearning embrace. So, too, did his awareness that the young men in the literary and New Age circles he visited and who visited him on his farm had been weakened by the feminism of the era, and that male consciousness was in short and despairing supply. It was time, as Bly would say, to do something for the hive again.

Iron John, then, grows not only out of Bly's experience during the past decade in the men's movement but out of the central meanings of his life. If he has bought into the confusion and anxiety of many younger men today, caught between the new sensitivity and the old machismo, he has done so with the capital he has earned from his own growth as a man, a poet, a thinker and a husbandman of the culture. The souled fierceness that he prescribes for staking out and protecting the borders of male identity has provided much of the motive energy for his career as a literary radical. By the same token, his devotion to asserting and cultivating the primalness and primacy of the imagination in a highly domesticated and institutionalized literary culture has led him to view the condition of men in similar terms and to apply the learning he has acquired in the archeology and anthropology of the imagination to remedy it. This authority is finally what makes *Iron John* a serious, groundbreaking book.

The startling public appeal of Bly's therapeutic sermon is not hard to fathom. Based on Jungian psychology, it takes a much more positive measure of human potential for change than does the Freudian model, whose Great Father and Great Mother are pretty strictly one's own and give not much quarter to altering their influence: a foot of freedom here, a pound less grief there. Bly's pagan goodspell is that the gods are still around and within each of us, able to be mobilized or deactivated, as the case may be. Like Rilke's torso of Apollo, they search us out where it aches and command us to treat it and thereby change our lives.

Also, *Iron John* has a lot of specific insight and lore to teach men and employs a very effective method. It takes an old story and gives it a new spin, thereby enlisting the child in us who is still most open to learning and the adult who is keen to escape from his own banality. Along with combining therapy for men, or at the very least clarity, with a course in the world mythology and ethnography of male initiation, *Iron John* is also a spiritual poetry reading in which the words of Blake and Kabir, Rumi and Yeats and many others join Bly's own poems as a kind of accompaniment to the text.

The prominence of poetry in the men's movement is perhaps its most surprising feature; none of the other situational groups seem to be particularly disposed to it, and most poets would tend to agree with Auden that poetry "makes nothing happen." Perhaps it's only an aspect of Bly's influence, but I see it as part of the same reviving interest in the imagination signified by the increasing popularity of poetry readings.

Some people say that the men's movement will have to move into national politics, as the women's movement has done, if it is to survive its trendiness and become socially significant. I'm not so sure. As the bonanza of the Reagan era recedes and the midlife crisis of its favored generation draws on, there are a lot of men in America who have mainly their imaginations to fall back upon. As a social analysis of male distress, *Iron John* is pretty thin stuff; but that's not why it is being read. It's not the *Growing Up Absurd* of the nineties but rather a deeply based counsel of self-empowerment and change. Like the men's movement itself, it offers the sixties generation another crack at the imagination of alternatives they grew up on, right where they most inwardly live and hurt and quest. This is the imagination that they turned in to become Baby Boomers; if it can be let loose in America by this broad, influential and growing situational group, there's no telling what can happen. □

Chasing Austen

CAROLYN COOKE

BRIEF LIVES. *By Anita Brookner. Random House. 260 pp. $20.*

The British novelist Anita Brookner writes orderly, limpid prose about women who have been good girls all their lives, who have lived carefully and within the rules, but who, when they reach a critical mass of experience and disappointment, harden. The question is whether they acquire a granite toughness and become venerable, or, like sandstones too long exposed to weather, they grow brittle and crumble. This tension between venerableness and brittleness informs some of Brookner's best work—*The Misalliance*, *A Friend From England* and the Booker Prize–winning *Hotel du Lac*—and it is the central theme of her newest novel, *Brief Lives*.

Like Edith Hope, the writer of romance novels in *Hotel du Lac*, or Blanche Vernon in *The Misalliance*, who "occupied her time most usefully in keeping feelings at bay," Fay Dodworth is a woman turning to dust. She is unfertile, sere, pristine as a chalk cliff and—this unfortunately is true of most of Brookner's characters—humorless. Without the context Brookner tries to give her, a locus of empathy and psychological realism, Dodworth would be just another stiff upper lip casting a shadow on a Burberry, a rigid tweedy figure among the boxed biscuits at Harrod's.

Dodworth (doddering but worthy) is a widow of a certain age, a former singer of popular ballads on radio who, years ago, threw up her career to marry. Marrying slightly above herself, marrying for love was, Fay now realizes, a mistake. Marriage, the hoped-for denouement of the short story of youth in Jane Austen's novels, turns out, in Brookner's late day, to be based on lies, misalliances, each couple a handwoven tapestry threaded with its own pattern of unhappiness. In exchange for her heart, Fay got thirty years in *haute* suburban oblivion—"engraved wine glasses . . . [a] bed big enough for the birth of royalty, the winsome fresco in the bathroom." In late middle age, time for writing up a life's page of regrets, Fay realizes that she would sacrifice everything for "a bunch of blue carnations, magnificently vulgar, from the market. I began to discern depths of superficiality and bad taste in

Carolyn Cooke is a writer and teacher living in Massachusetts.

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myself which I could see were not wholly regrettable."

The remainder of the novel is, in one sense, Fay's effort to cultivate a patch of superficiality and bad taste, to salt in a black spot on her otherwise sterling character. It is this subtle form of social breakdown—like Marianne's stifled scream in Austen's *Sense and Sensibility*—that most interests Brookner. The beauty of her heroines is their restraint in their unraveling. There is a crispness and poignancy to Fay's reflection that

> those old songs that I used to sing, when I was innocent of their longing, do not haunt me. If I were to succumb to them again the pain would be immeasurable. They would remind me of the durability, the hopelessness of desire, as if underneath all experience lurks the child's bewilderment, Why do you not love me? say the songs. And if I love you, why do I still yearn for something beyond? These songs seem to me profound because they underline a rather sophisticated acknowledgment, namely that the act of love is finite and that what is being voiced is not only the disappointment of this but one's exacerbated need for a permanent transformation, exacerbated, that is, by the act of love itself.

Brookner employs her miniaturist's sense of event—of the magnitude, even the enormity, of everyday life—to reinforce this theme:

> The child, whose hair was about to be cut for the first time, screamed with terror and clung to her mother. The hairdresser stood by gravely, comb in hand: he recognized that this was a serious moment. The mother, blushing, tried to comfort the child who had suddenly plunged into despair; all around the shop women smiled in sympathy. What impressed me, and what I particularly remember, was the child's passionate attempt to re-enter her mother, the arms locked around the woman's neck, the terrified cries of unending love. So dangerous it is to be so close! I had tears in my eyes witnessing that bond, seeing that closeness, of which only a sorrowful memory remains in my own life. One loses the capacity to grieve as a child grieves or to rage as a child rages: hotly, despairing, with tears of passion.

The world view represented here sets Brookner apart from most of her contemporaries—Barbara Pym, Muriel Spark, Fay Weldon—for whom the ability to rage is directly, not inversely, proportional to experience and years. Brookner is probably the least funny, least bitingly witty of British women writers, and yet she is the most deeply satisfying. In the typical Brookner novel, a childless woman of uncertain years, cast adrift from her husband, finds solace in beauty or in keeping up appearances or in wine, and questions whether the self is really a loyal ally and whether personal dignity is worth the cost.

It bears noting that *Brief Lives*, like Muriel Spark's *Memento Mori*, belongs to the rather rare genus of novel that turns on characters facing the depredations of age—lost faculties, hand tremors, boredom, loneliness, deafness, arthritis, obituaries, senility—yet having the freedom to speak their mind. But where Spark treats the issue of old age with unsentimental and mordant wit—Granny Barnacle sends out once a week for a will form from Woolworth's and asks for help spelling words such as "hundred" and "ermine"—Brookner focuses on the philosophical dimensions of aging. Like the butler in Kazuo Ishiguro's *Remains of the Day* (and Ishiguro's cool, brilliant prose is strikingly similar to Brookner's in tone and affect), Fay Dodworth holds to superannuated, British standards of dignity and right living and, at the far end of a stuffy life, questions them. Her fault, like that of Ishiguro's butler, is solipsism —the disciplined, lifelong perfection of the self that alienates it from the world, and the emptiness at the end that one dares not name.

In spite of a dearth of reasonable, lovable men, Fay is reluctant to live alone, to lead an unwitnessed life. Which brings us back, for a moment, to the idea of life experience making one venerable or brittle. Fay's mother is an object lesson in what corner of the earth the meek inherit: "The sight of an abandoned plate containing a biscuit from which a minute bite has been taken, as if by a child, and which my mother had felt unable to finish, affected me inordinately. It was the first thing I found when I entered the house after her death. It was her last meal."

Opposite in every respect to Fay's brittle mother as a role model for old age is Julia Wilberforce (will by force). Julia is brazen and demanding, yet venerable; toward her, Fay feels the duty of a relation—she did not have the luxury of choosing Julia as a friend. Through Julia's story and her own, Fay chronicles their parallel lives: the strange and surprising loneliness of marriage, the tenacity of childhood dreams, the brief hollow, in life, between youth and prom-

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ise to disempowerment and old age.

Julia is the extreme character, and through her Fay defines her own more shadowy outline. Julia clearly represents the "superficiality and bad taste" that Fay is tending in her own spirit, and yet Fay reacts with a mixture of horror and sympathy: "Somewhere in the remote fastness of [Julia's] being, a long way behind the eyelids, and the ringed hand clutching a glass of whisky, she was a girl, but a girl of a rather lost variety, dreaming, unawakened, incurious, almost pure." Julia is glamorous but hollow, practically unconscious. Fay is plain, deep and naggingly aware. Part of Fay's triumph in the novel—if it is a triumph to acquiesce in old age—is in her repudiation of Julia and her old self. When Fay admits that she does not know how to live, such social agnosticism from someone to whom character has always meant everything affords a radical picture: a woman of quality, belly up and gasping for air.

Like Austen's Elizabeth Bennet, or Elinor and Marianne Dashwood, Brookner's heroines operate within a demanding society that requires perfect figure skating across the slipperiest surfaces of public life. Alienated from nature by civilization, insulated by property and subordinate to men, they lack intense involvement in either love or work; society is entertainment and protection. Lacking love, lacking meaningful work, Fay aspires to usefulness, to the crisp efficiency of a day organized to the rhythm of a Strauss polka. Usefulness is her penance: "I had always wanted to be good," she confesses, "yet had turned out to be flawed."

Brookner's sentences resonate with right words and truth; she is an elegant stylist, a veined, unblinking eye on the inner panorama. *Brief Lives* breaks no new ground in her *oeuvre*, but it stands with her best work on the ultimate triumph of Woman Alone. Brookner, who is also an art historian and the first woman to hold the post of Slade Professor at Cambridge University, writes novels reminiscent of Turner paintings—dull colors under violent, apocalyptic skies; books that enclose you in their extraordinary weather, the storm and crack of ordinary lives as they snap suddenly into wholeness. □

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FILMS.

STUART KLAWANS

Summer Celluloid Meltdown II: The Sequel

A rich man's son, acting on impulse, invites a talkative old codger to dinner. Once there, the guest carries on so whimsically that another member of the company bets money he can't give a straight answer to a simple question. Sure enough, the old rogue continues to tease his listeners, make up stories and put forth all manner of ridiculous ideas, among them a proposal that we should model our behavior on that of dogs.

Perhaps the most amazing facet of this little drama—which you may find in Books I-III of Plato's *Republic*—is that so many people have taken it seriously, including its suggestions for editing the works of Homer. Such revisions are necessary, Plato has Socrates claim, if poetry is to carry out its mission: educating us all to be good doggies.

That the obedience-school theory of the arts survives to this day is a tribute to its versatility. It serves everyone from Jesse Helms to the editors of *The New York Times*, who couldn't put together a single Arts & Leisure section without it. Someone is always worried over the effect of the latest role models on a populace in need of guidance. Useless to ask, in the words of another satirical rogue, "Who will educate the educators?" Useless to hint that Socrates, far from endorsing this theory of art, might have been poking fun at it.

Fortunately, we have in our midst two young men who have spoken with Socrates directly and can tell us what he really meant. I refer to Bill and Ted, who burst upon an unsuspecting public in *Bill & Ted's Excellent Adventure* (1989) and now have returned in the more elaborate but no less ebullient *Bill & Ted's Bogus Journey*. Time-traveling high school students from San Dimas, California, Bill (Alex Winter) and Ted (Keanu Reeves) are more innocent, and have strayed farther abroad, than any fictional characters in recent memory. Though useless as role models for anybody—which is a large part of their merit—they nevertheless have been chosen by fate to save the world, and to my mind are doing a very fine job of it.

Bill is the one who wears a baseball cap backward on his curly blond head. He has a tendency to scrunch up his face, and he says "Whoa!" slightly more often than does his partner. In terms of body language and overall goofiness, he might remind older viewers of Ed Norton. But this is Norton without Ralph Kramden as a foil. Instead of playing off of an opposite type, Bill enters into a frictionless *folie à deux* with Ted, a character who is even more Norton-like than he. With stringy dark hair perpetually falling over his eyes, Ted seems a bit more inward than Bill, perhaps because he can't see much. Apart from the minor differences, though, the two friends are indistinguishable. Enclosed in a mutually validating fantasy, they copy each other's vocabulary (which is limited but highfalutin), mimic each other's air-guitar technique, insist to each other (since the world will not yet pay heed) that "Together, we are Wyld Stallyn!" Yes, Bill and Ted are so dumb, they even screw up the misspelling of their own not-quite-existent band.

Are they capable of being educated? Their new movie offers a partial, last-minute answer, with implications so satisfying that I wouldn't dream of giving you their benefit in a review. Let's just say that Bill and Ted seldom feel the need for self-improvement. This optimism, about themselves and the benevolence of the universe, was the explicit theme of their first film, in which Authority demanded that the boys pass an exam in history. Rather than study, they took advantage of a time machine built into a telephone booth, delivered to them by a futuristic guru named Rufus (George Carlin). The device enabled Bill and Ted to consult some of the greatest figures in Western Civ, from Plato's codger (whom the boys kept calling So-Crates) to Joan of Arc (who was, they supposed, the wife of Noah). In other words, Bill and Ted learned nothing. Rather, it was the giants of the past who were enlightened by their encounter with Bill and Ted. That's how good it is to be an American teenager.

Authority, as embodied in various film critics, shook its mature head and muttered. Never mind that the Bible itself tells us the last shall be first—a creature so despicable as the underachieving adolescent was simply too far back in last place to be accorded any respect. The characters being portrayed were stupid; and so, following a line of reasoning that might have given So-Crates himself the giggles, most commentators concluded that the film must be stupid, too. It made

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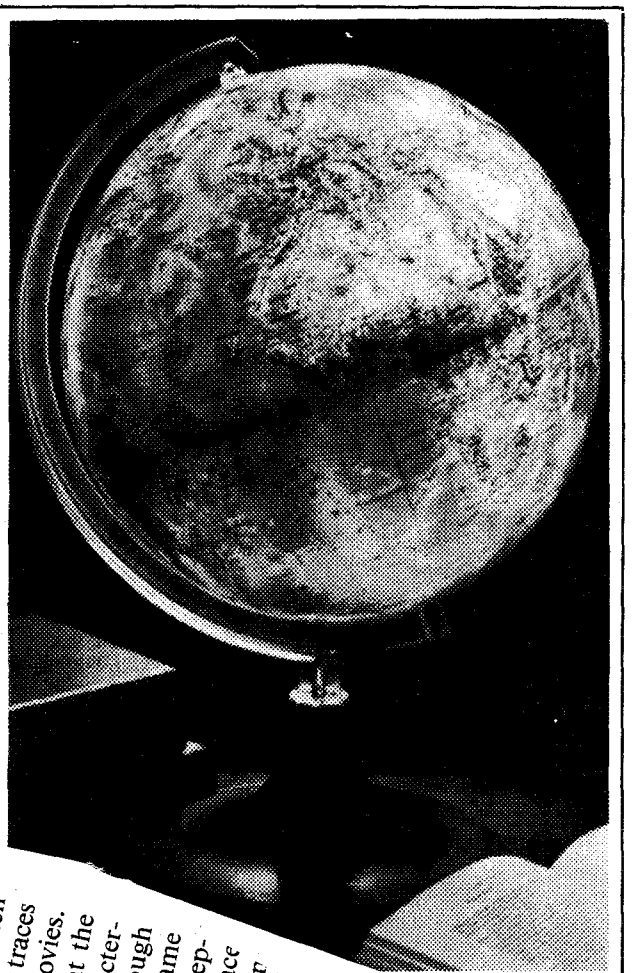

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the insult all the more keen, then, that the movie recapitulated its characters' prophesied success. Budgeted on the Hollywood equivalent of spare change and dumped onto the market in February, *Bill & Ted's Excellent Adventure* annoyed everybody who was halfway serious by jumping to the top of the box-office charts and staying there, week after week. It finished the year on *Variety*'s list of top-grossing films, went on to glory in the video-rental market and now has spawned a sequel with the identical attitude. Deference to authority? This time, the boys come clunking in their oversized sneakers right up to the throne of God. "Congratulations on a most excellent planet," Ted says to the Almighty, by way of greeting. "Bill and I enjoy it on a daily basis."

Bill & Ted's Bogus Journey also takes the audience on a tour of Hell, dramatizes the conquest of death and concludes with a vision of universal redemption. In terms of theme, it's nothing less than a dudespeak translation of *Paradise Regained*. Clearly, *Bogus Journey* is the most ambitious work of the imagination that America has produced in recent years, with the possible exception of James Merrill's later poems—and you'll note that Merrill, too, speaks through a medium that can't be taken seriously. He uses a Ouija board, whereas the creators of Bill and Ted—Chris Matheson and Ed Solomon—use teenagers. Either way, pomposity dissolves on contact.

To judge the advantage of this method, you might compare *Bogus Journey* with the biggest of the summer sequels, which also has an explicitly redemptive theme: *Terminator 2: Judgment Day*. The subtitle isn't kidding. More than just another shoot-'em-up, *Terminator 2* shows us that the apocalypse is at hand, conceived in mundane terms as nuclear war. Salvation lies through a young man named John Connor and his almost-virginal mother, Sarah (Linda Hamilton), a Madonna with deep-cleft deltoids and much experience with automatic weapons. And who gets to play Our Father? It's Schwarzenegger, redeemed from his bad-guy role in the first *Terminator*. This Second Coming has Arnold turning into the Protector—a robot from the future who will guard John Connor with absolute devotion and superhuman strength. As Sarah comes to realize, in one of the film's frequent moments of hilarity, only the Protector can meet her standards for paternity.

But *Terminator 2* is above all else an action movie, which means that sacred conversation can sneak in only as a pause for breath, between the car chases and firefights. These are unfailingly spectacular, showing off the very latest in Hollywood pyrotechnics and special effects, including a new-model Terminator that can change shape at will. (Like Schwarzenegger, this creation is something of a revenant. It's based on special effects developed for *The Abyss*, the previous film by writer-director James Cameron.) My only reservation about all this machinery is that I sense it has reached a point of diminishing returns.

At a cost of undisclosed millions—it's reportedly the most expensive movie ever produced—*Terminator 2* has made all previous special-effects extravaganzas look cheesy. But audiences are getting harder and harder to amaze, as their expectations rise in parallel with the price of illusion-making. The average 14-year-old today probably sneers at *2001: A Space Odyssey*. It looks phony. How soon will the effects in *Terminator 2* become laughable? How much will have to be spent the next time to get beyond the gee-whiz barrier?

Faced with such questions, I like to recall that the history of the special-effects film is essentially that of a mistake. While shooting on the streets of Paris one day in 1896, Georges Méliès jammed the feeding mechanism of his camera for a few seconds. When he later projected the film, he was amazed to see people vanish abruptly, then reappear in another spot. He'd invented the trick film, by accident. We might think of the fanta sists who have come along since as ' longing to two groups. The first, v includes Méliès himself, leave a fe of the accident visible in the That is, they allow you to magic trick is only that. T istic effect is charm, a a deliberate staginess might almost be a p arating you from you're watchir which has re *Terminato* thought is that tha

First, desire for

EXECUTIVE PURSUITS

How frequently of men in public life
it is said they like to hear themselves talk.
But do they listen?
Last month at Camp David the President,
sharing his views with the Press and having
briskly referred to
concepts that leave him cold, declared that what
gets him hot—under the collar, of course—
is "faintheartedness"
in the face of unfounded assertions.
Provoked by such pusillanimity
(his literal word),
the President enlarged upon his thought
in figural language, according to
his experience
as, Heaven help us, a hunter. Here
is his phrase of contempt: "*You get under*
the bush like a quail
and hope you don't get flushed out for a while."
To him this emblem of faintheartedness
came as readily
as a bird in the hand, and we all know
what one such bird in one such hand is worth.
We too are hunters.

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purge that desire, in the act of satisfying it. Early in the film, for example, John Connor orders the Protector to stop killing people. The Protector's initial response is to kneecap his victims instead. This lack of all sense of proportion was also a feature of the original Terminator, lending a comic exuberance to the violence he perpetrated. But in *Terminator 2*, Cameron makes an effort to transform this bloodlust. By the end of the picture, he has the audience cheering when the Protector *doesn't* kill anybody. Schwarzenegger blows up a lot of property, but the casualty count is zero. Good enough—and yet I can't help regretting the attendant note of self-importance that has crept into the production. A movie this expensive had *better* seem important. To make sure it does, Cameron seems willing to provide at least two of everything—including characters who die so that others may live.

Bill and Ted would never load themselves down so heavily. Granted, they too encounter a pair of robots from the future; but the Bill and Ted cyborgs are hopeless, low-budget doofuses compared with Schwarzenegger, which is the whole point. Like everything else in *Bogus Journey*, the robots seem to have sprung from the characters' own limited store of knowledge. The movie plays as if it had been scripted by Bill and Ted themselves; the direction, by Pete Hewitt, consistently adopts a simple, straightforward, dude's-eye point of view. The performances are equally seamless. Unlike Hope and Crosby in the *Road* movies, or Billy Crystal in the current, dismal *City Slickers*, Alex Winter and Keanu Reeves never break character, never tip off the audience that they're smarter than the movie they inhabit. Bill and Ted don't make jokes; they *are* a joke, and so is their entire universe, right down to its Hell (a truly original one, designed by David L. Snyder) and its Grim Reaper (gleefully portrayed by William Sadler, with a tip of the scythe to Bergman's *The Seventh Seal*).

As for this problem of education: At the end of *Bogus Journey*—or the beginning, it's hard to say which—Bill and Ted do take on the role of instructors. They are the founders of Bill and Ted University, where everybody tramps around in a Frankenstein's monster gait, wearing those oversized shoes, and headphones are required equipment for students attempting to do homework. Do not be dismayed. The entire curriculum of the university, along with all of the law and the prophets, may be summarized in Bill and Ted's dictum, "Be excellent to one another." The wonderful thing about Bill and Ted is that they have nothing more than that to teach. All they really want is to make you happy, and they don't even expect to be thanked for it.

Short Takes: *Europa Europa*, the new film by Agnieszka Holland, is a true-life fable based on the autobiography of Solomon Perel. On one level it's a story about the Holocaust, told from a very strange point of view. Perel, a Jew from the German city of Peine, survived the war by passing himself off as Aryan; he was so successful at it that he was admitted to the academy for Hitler Youth in Berlin. On another level, the film is about a clandestine territory that existed just under the surface of Nazi Europe—a hidden continent of people like Solomon Perel, who recognized one another by nods and winks. At times the film is moving, as when Perel (Marco Hofschneider) in full Hitler Youth regalia takes a tram through the ghetto of Lodz, hoping to locate his family and seeing only dim, partial glimpses of people. At times, the film is morally troubling—I can think of no other Holocaust account in which a Jew must excuse himself to Allied soldiers with the words, "I didn't know." But the overall effect, at least for me, was giddiness. Holland has made a Holocaust movie that wants to go to your head, not your heart. I found it thrilling.

David Zucker and Jim Abrahams, who collaborated on *Airplane*, are in competition this summer with two anarchic comedies. The Abrahams movie, *Hot Shots*, is a parody of Navy flier movies such as *Top Gun* and stars Charlie Sheen, who's been in a couple himself. Not bad—but the ratio of live jokes to duds is perilously low, and the satire all but dissipates in the climactic sequence, a replay of the Persian Gulf war. I preferred Zucker's *The Naked Gun 2 1/2: The Smell of Fear*, in which Leslie Nielsen once more pretends to be a hard-bitten cop, despite having the physical self-control of a 3-year-old. The laughter comes more consistently, and there are a great many rude political jokes thrown in amid the slapstick. Both films are co-written by Pat Proft; but only one has Barbara Bush

TOMORROW, PERHAPS

"I'm sorry sir, but she's not in today."—
That's this morning in Brooklyn, not
Poland 1944, huddled and afraid,

rounded up, crowded together
on the railroad platform, clutching our bags,
not knowing (not believing!) what would happen

next. And much did happen, and much is
forgotten. Pushed back in the mind to a
place where certain events, too painful

to recall, live and never die. So that now
when we hear ". . . she's not in today,"
it's only a minor irritation, not even

a toothache, not anything to make
a big deal about. We're alive, after all,
aren't we? We weep and make plans . . .

our children go to school. Of course
we're alive, aren't we? Some of us, anyway—
aren't we? But sleep . . . that's another story.

We don't—not much. Not for these past
forty-five years. In a desert for years,
with water and bread . . . but no sleep. Because

she's not in today. Tomorrow? Perhaps. And
perhaps is something to give thanks for,
isn't it? Something to be glad about.

Gary Pomerantz

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getting smacked in the face with a lobster.

Finally, an update on *Thelma & Louise*. I don't want to enter into the debate over the picture, which I suspect is being carried out more actively in the press than in people's living rooms. Nevertheless, having seen the film a second time, in the company of my favorite art historian and her splendid daughter, I must report a small shift in my attitude. Originally, I said I liked the film, though I had a few small objections to Callie Khouri's screenplay and the direction by Ridley Scott. Now I can no longer locate the parts I didn't like. Just thought you should know. □

EXCHANGE.

(*Continued From Page 250*)

disaster. But it is a social construct, caused in large part by the fact that the criminal justice system, even today, is pervaded at every level by people who share his vision of rape: his double-standard notions of sexuality, his suspicion of women's motives and his ignorance of their lives. As a justice-achieving system, our approach to rape is a spectacular failure, but as a victim-deterrent system it works extremely well. Although not, apparently, well enough for Dershowitz.

A word to several letter writers who think I convicted William Smith without a trial. I nowhere expressed a judgment about the facts in the case. My essay was about the media coverage and about the issue of anonymity for rape complainants. I tried to be careful in my language—she is the complainant, he is the accused, etc. True, as one reader pointed out, I did refer to a "rapist" exonerated by a Florida jury solely because of the complainant's sexy clothing. But for the record, that man was later convicted in another rape case, so he is a government-certified rapist now.

One other thing. A surprising number of readers think the Smith case is the work of a political cabal intent on preventing a Kennedy presidency. I like a good conspiracy theory myself, but let's get real here. Ted Kennedy lost the White House when he went off the bridge at Chappaquiddick (did the Republicans arrange that too?). The young Kennedy men (no one spoke up for the women) had a long list of scandals and lackluster performances to their credit long before this latest incident. If you read your *Nation*, you should know by now that the liberal wing of the Democratic Party has problems famous names can't fix. Indeed, it shows contempt for both the voters *and* our politics to argue that the only liberal who can win is one with celebrity status. What we need is a mass movement and some good ideas. The young Kennedys aren't interested in either—so forget them. As the Good Book says, Put not thy trust in princes.

Katha Pollitt

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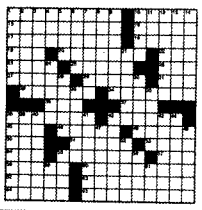

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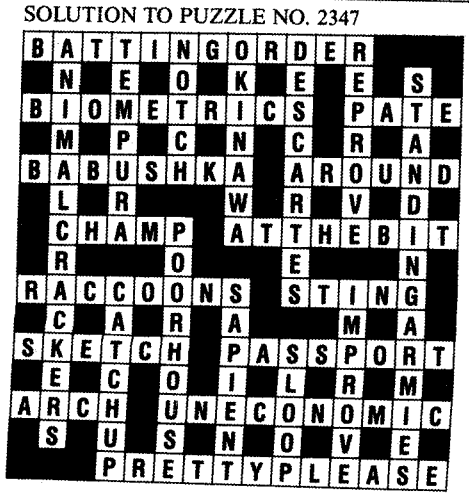

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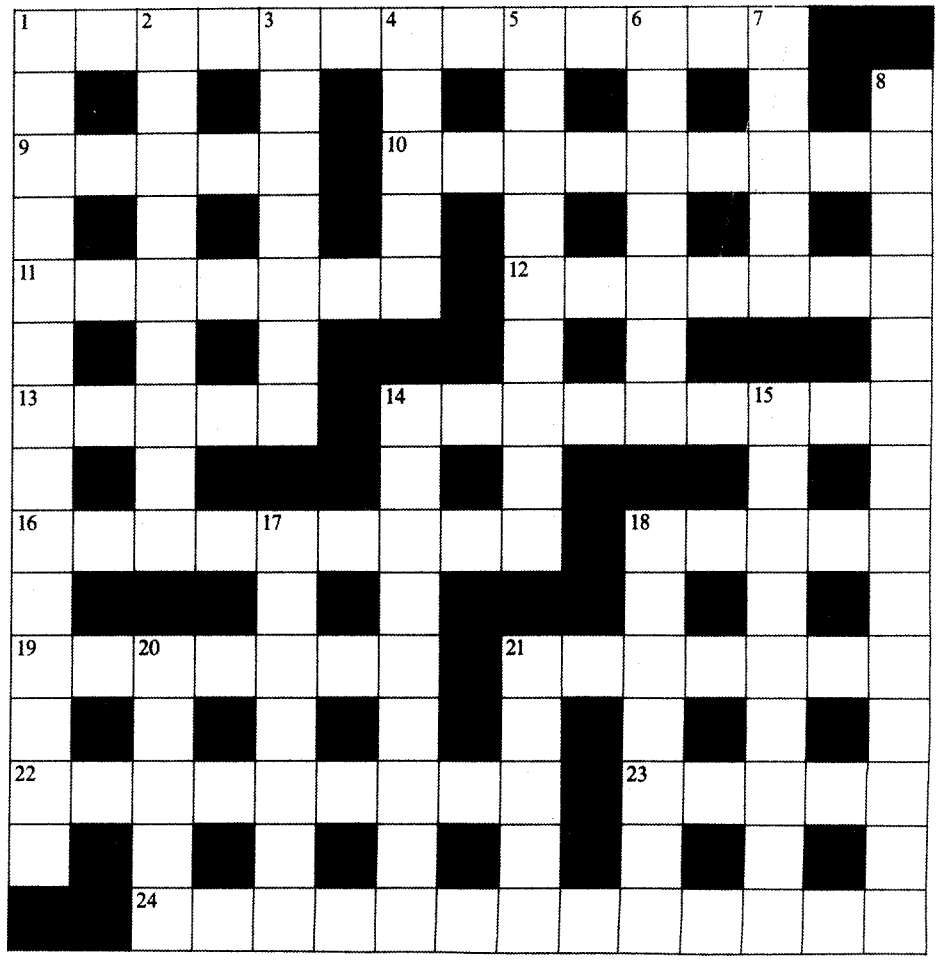

ACROSS

1 Anagramatically equivalent to "earthshattering," which is too bad! (13)
9 Soft garment, which suggests a looking-into. (5)
10 Sort of moon-airship, like the Spirit of St. Louis. (9)
11 Nothing fits on a tiny bit of a meter like a letter from Athens! (7)
12 Where to put the horse or put in machinery? (7)
13 Bitter blame? Stand for the conductor, if not soft-headed! (5)
14 Pay a toll ahead of time, and you'll find one who thought we have devilish ways. (9)
16 Like the last hole (of course) one could have been considered a noble experiment. (9)
18 More like that rare moon, offering change for a ruble. (5)
19 Plain paper is like a state of anarchy. (7)
21 Bothers an underground worker on little streets. (7)
22 If you find me acting, I could be sphinx-like. (9)
23 You might find it hot when "on the nose" with a certain racehorse. (5)
24 The southeast begins to have chief military ravings, which detailed investigation might require. (6,7)

DOWN

1 A joint, on the river, of marijuana entertains big ones from Africa. (14)
2 Boeing Air offers indigenous variety. (9)
3 An article gets more confused as a logica proposition. (7)
4 Caesar was the noblest of them all, alternativ ly coming up on a person. (5)
5 The article on a night in France goes to t worker—one who doesn't work, but still g paid! (9)
6 As to the end, it goes to the devil, which is ing things on pretty thick! (7)
7 In Antigua, various tropical fruit migl found. (5)
8 Cure your old sort of specter, which we have for something dangerous. (7,7)
14 It's made up of short, funny tales, I hea the code being broken in some tricky v
15 Stick to red in Paris, in such a state. (17 One might have a problem with o horns. (7)
18 How to beat Mr. Bartok, coming t something. (7)
20 Supposedly plain dampers, in Spa
21 One bird coming up with the mor another. (5)

PUZZLED?

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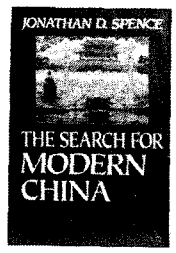

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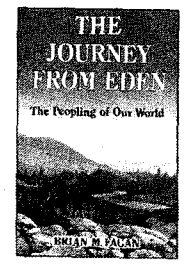

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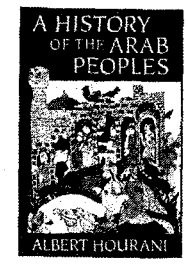

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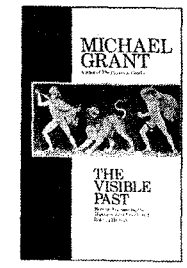

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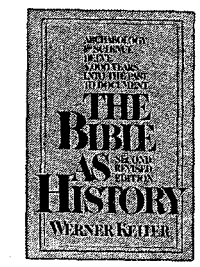

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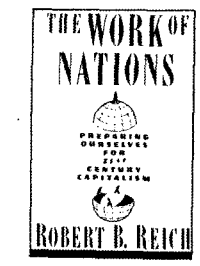

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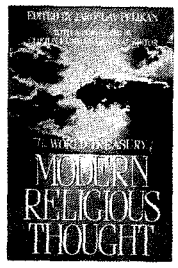

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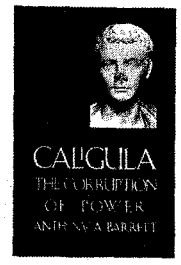

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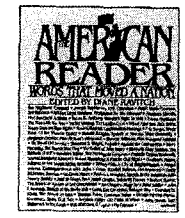

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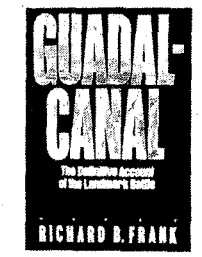

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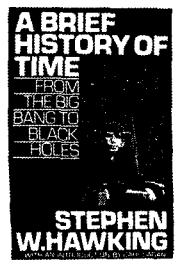

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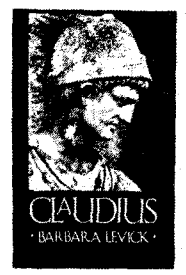

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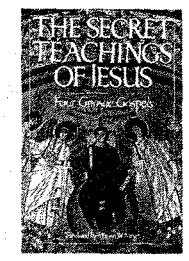

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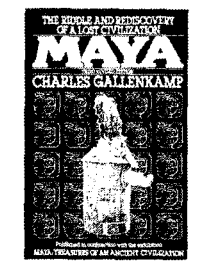

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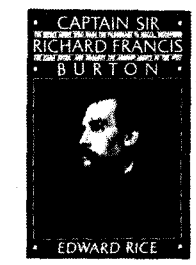
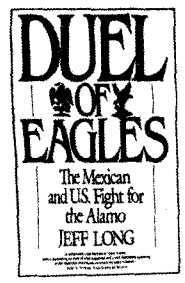


4838. $35/**$27.95**



5892. $22.95/**$17.95**

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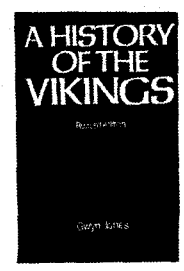

1172. $25/**$16.50**

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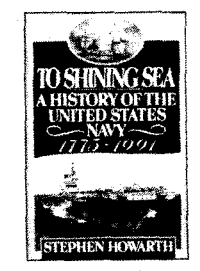

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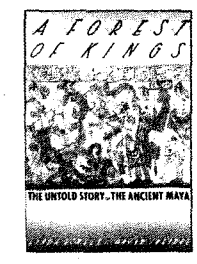

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